

## **An Orthodox Critique of Some Radical Approaches in New Testament Studies**

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### **Introduction**

It is indisputable that the Holy Bible forms the basis and foundation of faith for all Christian Churches and confessions. At the same time we cannot overlook the fact that with the passing of the centuries this foundation has continually suffered from various alterations, misinterpretations and distortions. This has direct and significant consequences in the interpretation and understanding of biblical texts. On the basis that these factors are closely related to each other, it is unavoidable that false interpretations of the holy texts create corresponding complications and further abnormalities in the dogmatic presence, the liturgical life, and generally in the behavior of some Christian Churches, confessions, communities, and sects.

Of course the whole subject is enormous and presents too many significant issues to be exhaustively analyzed in this paper. However, I would like to present some specific aspects of the problematic biblical issues of our time related to hermeneutical methods and results in East and West.

I will first look at the position held by the Holy Bible, focusing especially on the New Testament and how it is interpreted respectively by the Orthodox East and non-Orthodox West. I will then look at examples of inept interpretations and falsifications of the New Testament by selected theologians of the two official Christian Churches in Germany. I am ex-

amining here misinterpretations of content, which result as a natural consequence of the European Enlightenment and the arid rationalistic view of the books of the New Testament in the West.

### **The New Testament in Orthodoxy and in the West**

It is well known that from the very first apostolic years, the Orthodox East embraced and further preserved the delivered interpretation of the Fathers, who always respected the revelatory and holy character of the Scriptures, what we can call theocentric interpretation. On the other hand, prevailing since the Middle Ages in Western Christianity, there has been an interpretative spirit of rationalistic research of the texts which gives priority to historical facts<sup>1</sup> and banishes forever from the interpretative procedure the supernatural and revelatory intervention of the divine. This results in what we can call anthropocentric interpretation.

Whereas Orthodox theology and interpretation of the New Testament remains to this day faithful to the interpretative principles of the Fathers of the first centuries, without of course ignoring the historical research of modern times, the West has experienced in the last centuries huge fluctuations in its perspective on the holy texts. The West has been swept by various intellectual streams, such as the Renaissance, Humanism, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the Enlightenment, and Rationalism,<sup>2</sup> which have resulted in the hegemony of the "historical-critical method" of interpretation of the Holy Bible.<sup>3</sup>

### *Orthodox Interpretative Principles*

I would like here to sum up briefly the interpretative principles and the general perspective on the New Testament<sup>4</sup> in the Orthodox East. In this way, newer and radically modern divergences in interpretation by Western Churches will be-

come clearer.

The New Testament is not viewed by Orthodoxy as an assortment of texts which includes explicit philological, literary, and historical works, but rather as a God-given written expression of the revelation of God's plan for salvation. Scientific research in the East is based not only on logic, but also allows for the presence of the supernatural and miraculous in daily life. This fact is based on Orthodox theology's confidence that the revelatory intervention of the divine in earthly and human history has the character of singularity<sup>5</sup> and is not repeatable.

The interpretation of the Fathers, which is still valid and binding for Orthodoxy, emphasizes the ecclesiastical character of biblical interpretation, which is regarded as a gift, a service, a function which takes place among the ecclesiastical flock.<sup>6</sup> The interpreter in this paradigm is not cut off from the ecclesiastical tradition, and is thus rescued from an arid, individualist interpretation which runs the risk of arbitrariness. The interpreter must understand himself to be part of the receptive process of the divine revelation which leads to salvation.<sup>7</sup> In the New Testament we are warned of the uselessness of autonomous interpretation outside the ecclesial framework. The passage in the second Epistle of Peter is clear: "No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation."<sup>8</sup>

Because the texts of the New Testament, as the Apostle Paul emphasizes, expose "the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,"<sup>9</sup> their understanding demands communication, and, if possible, identification with the "mind" (νοῦς) of Christ, which exists within the texts and animates them. In other words, understanding demands the willing participation of the interpreter in the tradition and the ethos of the Church. We must especially emphasize the *liturgical character* of Orthodox interpretation, where the interpreter has been initiated into the mystical life of the

Church, in whose frame of commensal worship the revelation of the divine truths<sup>10</sup> is celebrated and interpreted.

The decisive factor for the interpretation of the Fathers, who are rightfully regarded as “living witnesses of the apostolic tradition,”<sup>11</sup> is defending and emphasizing the authentic and unadulterated faith of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. For this reason, to this day the interpretation of the Fathers enjoys great prominence. In this respect I must emphasize that by ‘prominence’ I do not mean a superficial and arid copying or a hasty repetition of the interpreted texts of the Fathers. It is not vitally necessary for the modern interpreter to align his personal opinion with the view of one or another of the Fathers or ecclesiastical authors regarding grammatical, philological, or historical matters arising in the New Testament. The issue is about something more: the Fathers, who enjoy the grace of God, do not want to supplant our autonomous thought and judgment, but they act as signposts, so that we move in the spirit of the Church during the interpretation of the holy texts.<sup>12</sup> The interpretative texts of the Fathers must not be slavishly copied in the Orthodox interpretation, but rather operate as guiding patterns for subsequent interpreters.

In closing this presentation of the principles of Orthodox interpretation I think it is important to mention briefly its method and limits. The interpretative understanding of the New Testament for Orthodoxy is not just a matter of using human logical capabilities.<sup>13</sup> The interpretation presupposes first and foremost the correct understanding of the Church, which is the ecclesiological base upon which we build the interpretation of the texts, fulfilled with an ecclesiastical ethos and infused by the liturgical grace of the sacraments. In the Orthodox interpretation it is not the method which is most important, but rather the faithful life of the interpreter in the Church.<sup>14</sup>

Certainly, the Orthodox approach, based on spiritual cri-



teria, does not exclude scientific academic research, and in fact presupposes it. We cannot reject scientific knowledge that contributes to the intellectual elaboration of biblical texts and their historical and ecclesiastical contexts in philological, historical, sociological, archaeological, philosophical, and psychological terms. The Orthodox interpreter does not merely sink thoughtlessly into a mystical atmosphere, where the real and the historical cease to exist. We must not forget that the incarnation of the Logos took place in concrete historical terms and is therefore subject to historical research methods. I could assert that intellectual research comes first, and after this purely scientific work is exhausted, the spiritual values and strengths of the Christian interpretation come into force.<sup>15</sup> Living in a state of spiritual grace, and acquiring the ecclesiastical experience which has the sweet fragrance of incense, the interpreter has at all times the awareness that he is continuing the interpretative work in the flowing river named Church Tradition. In this way he has the guarantee of interpretative clarity, and can avoid subjective arbitrariness and falsifications in the interpretation of the sacred texts.

### *Historical-Critical Interpretation in the West*

Whereas the interpretative paradigm of the Middle Ages presented a domain without individualized interpretation of texts or commentaries due to the dearth of biblical awareness among the faithful, interest in the Bible and its interpretation reawakens<sup>16</sup> with the outbreak of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. In Protestant circles, the subject of interpretation became the topic of autonomy to such an exaggerated degree that at the principle of self-sufficiency of the Bible (*sola scriptura*) was shaped. This was, in part, a radical reaction to the Roman Catholic position on the Holy Tradition and the perceived interpretive arbitrariness of the Pope and his long-standing claim to the right to teach the

whole Church.

In the framework of the Lutheran Reformation, and in combination with other rationalistic streams of European thinking at that time, (such as the Enlightenment, Deism, Encyclopedism, and so forth), biblical interpretation obtained a clearly historical focus, which, over time, rejected and removed the divine and revelatory character of the holy texts. While Roman Catholicism in the Middle Ages, based on platonic and neoplatonic philosophical principles, emphasized to an extreme the mystic-spiritual character of the Bible,<sup>17</sup> Protestant interpretation came to proclaim as absolute the philological and historical character of the texts, eliminating every thought of supernatural and spiritual dimensions.

As a result, Protestant interpretation since the end of the eighteenth century has presented an obsessive analysis of the New Testament as a clearly historical book, which supposedly requires exclusively scientific research with pure theoretical and empirical methods, which were significantly developed during the nineteenth century. In this way, the so-called “historical-critical method” of interpretation of the New Testament was made official in Protestant denominations. In addition, after earlier fierce resistance, during the twentieth century the Roman Catholic Church also largely adopted the methods and principles of historical-critical interpretation. This approach analyzes the sacred texts with clearly intellectual scientific methods, and its highest goal is the research regarding and, if possible, the “uncovering” of the “historical Jesus,” who for Western biblical science has very little in common with the “risen Christ”<sup>18</sup> as described in the New Testament.

The historical-critical method, which includes many sub-methods (religious-historical, form-historical, history of syntax, and demystification, to name a few), certainly offered and continues to offer positive services to the science of New Testament interpretation. However, it cannot be charac-

terized as a particularly ideal method of New Testament research, as much of the results are disputed - even in eminent Western circles.<sup>19</sup>

With the systematic and nearly exclusive implementation of the historical-critical method in Western Christianity, certain basic principles have been established. While on the one hand these obtained an indisputable "holiness" and became unchallengeable "taboos" for Protestant and Roman Catholic scientific scholars, they nevertheless created an unbridgeable distance from Orthodox interpretation, which could not accept extreme conclusions that deviate from Orthodox faith and life. The following interpretative principles dominate in the West and are presented by Western scholars as self-evident New Testament interpretations:

a) In the interpretation of the Gospels an austere separation takes place between, on the one hand, the so-called "pre-resurrection" traditions, the texts which are supposedly close to the historical Jesus, and, on the other hand, those "post-resurrection" texts, which are supposed to be testimonies of faith included in the Gospels by later Christians. The form-historical method (*Formgeschichte*) and the history of composition (*Redaktionsgeschichte*), which primarily use literary (narrative) and historical approaches, have led to fragmentation, particularly of the synoptic Gospels. The Orthodox interpretation avoids using such arbitrary separations basically for theological reasons, especially in cases where it is extremely difficult to come to solid conclusions. I will give a brief example of this Western interpretative principle. The reduction of the original words of the historical Jesus to 12-15% of all his words as reported by the evangelists and their separation from the rest of the "pietist" texts of the Gospels leads Western interpretation to the conclusion that Jesus never spoke of himself as the "Son of God." It follows for Western interpreters that Jesus never had consciousness of his divinity and never intended to convince his

contemporaries of this truth. I think that the danger of adulterated, I would say, heretical teaching about the person of Christ becomes immediately obvious. This teaching touches the realms of docetism and even of atheism.

b) A second principle of interpretation, developed by Protestants and adopted afterwards by Roman Catholics, concerns the authenticity of the Letters of Paul. It is somewhat obvious for them to speak of “authentic texts” of the Apostle, meaning only the Epistle to the Romans, the First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians, the Epistle to the Galatians, the Epistle to the Philippians, the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, and the Epistle to Philemon.<sup>20</sup> As Westerners ascribe great interpretative importance and theological significance to the authenticity of these letters of Paul, one can imagine their indignant reaction if they heard in an Orthodox service the phrase: “A Reading from Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians” (“Πρὸς Κολοσσαεῖς ἐπιστολῆς Παύλου τὸ ἀνάγνωσμα”).

c) Finally, a third principle which is taken seriously in the Western mind is the division of the sacred text into different strata of meaning. The differentiation between the initial intention and original purpose of the New Testament author on the one hand, and the subsequent acceptance, understanding and elaboration by the Ancient Church on the other hand, seems to be very important. It is an interpretive principle which claims that the New Testament includes very little original, and therefore authentic, information,<sup>21</sup> which in any case was supposedly altered in subsequent elaboration in the post-apostolic years.

### **Examples of the Consequences of Western Interpretation**

I have already mentioned that we cannot close our eyes totally to the really remarkable conclusions and results of

the historical-critical method, which Orthodox interpreters take seriously in philological and historical research. Its use in the West without exception and with no spiritual prerequisites has unfortunately led also to "theological" views which, from my point of view, can only be characterized as theological abortions. The more the science of Western theologians, based on the historical-critical method, is being made absolute, the more "new findings" of alleged scientifically substantiated deductions are uncovered. They comprise rather dangerous experimentation using newer sciences (psychology, for example) to analyze fundamental matters which are too serious to be subjected to such irresponsible treatment. I am speaking essentially about the alteration of the traditional faith, centuries old, which demonstrates its established authority through tremendous literary production and which has left its indelible stamp on the whole of human history, secular and ecclesiastical.

In order to form a picture of the newer deductions of the historical-critical method in the West, one should bear in mind that they also dispute primary issues of faith, such as the Trinity, the conception and birth from the Virgin Mary and the rising from the dead of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately such deductions are emanating not only from Protestant circles, but also from Roman Catholic academic theologians.<sup>22</sup> I will selectively mention the personal views in matters of interpretation and faith of two well-known German theologians, one Protestant and one Roman Catholic.

My first example concerns the Protestant former professor of the New Testament at the University of Göttingen, Gerd Lüdemann, who, with his views on the most essential matters of Christian faith, has managed to place in dispute the whole Christian symbol of the faith (*credo*) and to offend not only academic theology but also the wider ecclesiastical flock. He was finally forbidden by the local bishop in 1996 from taking part in the examination of future

Protestant priests, and subsequently the academic chair of the New Testament was taken from him. He has distanced himself officially since the beginning of 1998 from Christian dogma and today teaches "History and Philosophy of Early Christianity" at the University of Göttingen.<sup>23</sup>

I would also mention here the results of his so-called "historical" research regarding the birth of Jesus Christ from the Virgin Mary, who is vulgarly humiliated in one of his books.<sup>24</sup> Lüdemann maintains that he can find no historical fact which proves and justifies the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit and his virgin birth by the Virgin Mary.<sup>25</sup> According to his historical-philological views, the characterization of Jesus in the Gospel according to Mark as "the son of Mary"<sup>26</sup> relates to other expressions and customs of the Old Testament,<sup>27</sup> according to which only illegitimate children are mentioned in relation to their mother's name. For Lüdemann, therefore, this characterization in the Gospel of Mark intended to express a taunt from the perspective of the mob, "branding" the alleged extramarital conception and infamous birth of Jesus.<sup>28</sup> Certainly the "scientific" fantasy of this German academic has no limits, and so, in his willingness to justify the "unjustifiable," he adds the extreme possibility, in his opinion, of the rape of Mary,<sup>29</sup> who thereafter does not dare to name a father for the newborn. I think that such teachings are worth neither lengthy discussion nor refutation.

The rationalistic methods of the newer science dominate also the effusive mind of a most prolific Roman Catholic writer and theologian, Eugen Drewermann, who succeeded, with his scientific "doings," in causing turmoil in his Church. He is a typical example of Western theology, and is responsible for the creation of the so-called "Drewermann phenomenon," which has been criticized by other serious Western scholars and theologians.<sup>30</sup> We are dealing here with an academic theologian who wanted to overturn every dog-

ma of the undivided Church (and also subsequent dogmatic innovations in his own Church),<sup>31</sup> but who was finally barred from educating seminarians and other theologians, and from preaching in churches in his archdiocese. This academic from the German University of Paderborn, who insists on the application of the principles of psychology and deep psychology, substantially and systematically critiqued the symbol of faith (*credo*), which forms the foundation of Christianity. A key element of Drewermann's theological viewpoint is the denial of the concept of the birth of Jesus Christ from the Virgin, and he characteristically emphasizes the physical impossibility of Mary's virginity.<sup>32</sup> This part in his teaching was only the very unpleasant beginning of a series of delusions that were to follow.

The blind use of the historical-critical method and also the resolute implementation of the "demythologization" of a collection of supposedly purely philological texts, as the New Testament is often characterized in Western science, had unfortunate and destructive consequences for one of the most central dogmas of Christianity: the resurrection of the Logos of God. Another text written by Gerd Lüdemann on the resurrection<sup>33</sup> has precipitated another storm of reaction and protest, which, even in Western circles, has not yet abated. In this book, rationalism attains new heights and "tangible logical" results are presented. I quote a translation of a key sentence from the text: "We cannot any more comprehend the resurrection from the dead of Jesus in the strict sense ... Because from the historical perspective we don't know anything about the empty grave (Was it empty? Are we sure it was an individual grave?), and also nothing about the preservation of the body of Jesus: Did it decompose? Anyway, I consider this result as inevitable."<sup>34</sup> In another study he writes: "In any case Jesus was not raised, he disintegrated, even if all early Christian testimonies report differently."<sup>35</sup>

Lüdemann's way of reasoning is obvious: limited and

substantially isolated and imprisoned in the rationalist mind, he cannot and does not show even the normative inclination of a Christian theologian to accept the imminence of the divine factor in this created life. It seems that he has forgotten the founding truth of the “divine emptying” (κένωσις) of Jesus Christ. For this reason, he is led unavoidably to an acceptance of what I would call psychological fantasy. He mentions, characteristically, that, “The resurrection of Jesus did not take place at the grave in Jerusalem, but in the hearts of the disciples.” In reply to a question put to him in an interview, whether Jesus is among us in the same way as Goethe or Gandhi, Lüdemann answered: “Yes, only in this way. The meeting with Jesus takes place only in the texts, or it does not take place at all.”<sup>36</sup> So according to the “new” facts, we must conclude, based on Lüdemann’s intellectual techniques, that the two disciples, who, according to the narratives of the Gospels<sup>37</sup> met the risen Christ on the way to Emmaus, in reality did not meet him. Why then did both of them narrate the same details? According to Lüdemann, either because they had planned and agreed among themselves what to say, or because they had experienced exactly the same dream!

Drewermann also moves in the same rationalist historical-critical way. The controversy of Jesus’ resurrection, which he tries to demythologize,<sup>38</sup> is included in the framework of his novel teachings. According to him, one of the most efficient interpretative methods is psychology, which is able, through its use of archetypes, to help the New Testament reader to understand in a useful way the mythically formulated realities of the religious image of the world at that time.

### Conclusion

From the theological perspective and liturgical experience of the Orthodox Church, the viewpoints of Lüdemann and Drewermann are unacceptable and unfounded, because



they are shortsighted and contrary to the received teaching of tradition. They do not have the ability to integrate the logical-physical with the superlogical-metaphysical element of the divine revelation; they cannot bridge the obvious human factor with the imminent divine presence in the world. But it is precisely there and in those terms that we can speak of the "mystery of economy." The same theological thesis was manifest in early Christian worship, which is widely regarded as a valuable and valid historical source for the study of the origins and evolution of Christianity. An example from Orthodox worship is the hymn in which we find the striking expression that "the laws of nature have been overcome"<sup>39</sup> in the virginal conception of Mary.

The approaches of the German intellectuals discussed above, and their interpretations of the texts of the New Testament, isolate them from the broader context of divine revelation, as does their reliance upon rationalist methods of interpretation. As a result, they both conclude that the reported appearances of the risen Jesus do not have any historical reality, which calls into question the theological and ecclesial meaning of these appearances. The disciples and the other apostles and followers (the twelve, the seventy or the five hundred, whom the Apostle Paul mentions<sup>40</sup>) did not see their Messiah but rather fantasized his appearance, or so Lüdemann maintains. This happens, he continues, to all who are emotionally distressed and sorely grieved upon losing a loved one. Certainly, what remains unanswered is the question of the simultaneous common influence of this experience on scores or even hundreds of people.

It is not possible to subject faith events to the arid judgment of postmodern scientific research and experimentation. Orthodoxy, as a system of beliefs of faith and principally as a way of life, does not need the *faux* analyses and research of types of psychology which give the appearance of being scientifically legitimate. The essence of Christianity is the

final salvation of every human person, and this, according to Orthodox interpretive tradition, is completely historical, tangible, and meaningful. Correspondingly, facts that guarantee our salvation must also be real and tangible. The Apostle Paul underlines this truth, when he characteristically writes: "And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished."<sup>41</sup>

For Orthodox soteriology, the eschatological salvation of humanity cannot be ensured if a stable foundation does not exist, namely the guarantee of the resurrection of the Son of God. Orthodox thought does not tolerate compromises. Not only the subjective but also the objective fact of Jesus' resurrection provides security and guarantee for the salvation of human beings. Just as during Christ's incarnation he fully assumed human nature as a real guarantee for the possibility of its *theosis* through divine grace, so also during his historical resurrection the complete human nature was raised as a tangible verification of the triumph over death. In order to be consistent in the rationalist logic of Lüdemann and Drewermann, then in addition to the resurrection, the incarnation of Christ must be questioned and doubted. In this case, however, Christianity is substantially dissolved. This approach automatically sets aside the "Christian," or faith-based, reference, for a more rationalist approach, as happened with both Lüdemann and Drewermann. Lüdemann's assessment as it relates to Christianity is stated clearly in one of his later studies: "The reconstruction of that which Jesus really said and did allows us indeed to develop a portrait of a great man of antiquity. But that which remains is too little upon which to build a Christianity."<sup>42</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For more analytic elements see Werner Georg Kümmel, *Das Neue Tes-*

tament. *Geschichte der Erforschung seiner Probleme*, (2d ed.; Freiburg and München: Quelle und Meyer, 1970), 266.

<sup>2</sup> About these influences, see Savas Agouridis, Ἑρμηνευτική τῶν ἱερῶν κειμένων (Athens, 1982), 152.

<sup>3</sup> From the Orthodox perspective, the critical presentation of Western interpretative science is quite interesting. See, e.g. J. Karavidopoulos, Ἡ ἐπιστημονικὴ ἔρευνα τῆς Καινῆς Διαθήκης ἐν τῷ Προτεσταντισμῷ καὶ τῷ Ρωμαιο-καθολικισμῷ κατὰ τὴν τελευταίαν πεντηκονταετίαν, *EETHStH* 11 (1966), 475-500.

<sup>4</sup> For an analytic view of the Orthodox interpretation see E. Antoniadis, "Die orthodoxen hermeneutischen Grundprinzipien und Methoden der Auslegung des Neuen Testaments und ihre theologischen Voraussetzungen," in *Procès-Verbaux du premier Congrès de Théologie Orthodoxe* (Athens, 1939), 143-174; V. Vellas, "Die Heilige Schrift in der griechisch-orthodoxen Kirche," in *Die Orthodoxe Kirche in griechischer Sicht*, vol. 1 (ed. P. Bratsiotis; Stuttgart, 1959), 121-140; G. Galitis, "Offenbarung, Inspiration und Schriftauslegung nach orthodoxem Verständnis," *Una Sancta* 2 (1980), 122-128; Savas Agouridis, Ἑρμηνευτική τῶν ἱερῶν κειμένων (Athens, 1982).

<sup>5</sup> In connection with this, see G. Galitis, Ἑρμηνευτικά τῆς Καινῆς Διαθήκης, (6th ed.; Thessaloniki, 1984), 149.

<sup>6</sup> See also G. Galitis, "Historisch-kritische Bibelwissenschaft und orthodoxe Theologie," *Etudes théologiques de Chambésy* 4 (1984), 114-115.

<sup>7</sup> For interesting discussion of this, see: M. Basarab, "Die Kirche als Verkünderin und Auslegerin der Heiligen Schrift," *Ofo* 2 (1988), 43-49.

<sup>8</sup> 2 Pet 1:20; cf. 2 Pet 3:16-17.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor 2:7: ἀποκεκρυμμένη ἐν μυστηρίῳ σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἣν προώρησεν ὁ Θεός πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. J. Panagopoulos, Τὸ Θεολογικὸν πρόβλημα τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἑρμηνευτικῆς, reprinted from Εἰσηγήσεις Α' Ὁρθοδόξου Ἑρμηνευτικοῦ Συνεδρίου (Athens, 1973), 9. There the phrase "liturgical interpretation" is mentioned.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. E. Antoniadis, "Die orthodoxen hermeneutischen Grundprinzipien und Methoden der Auslegung des Neuen Testaments und ihre theologischen Voraussetzungen," in *Procès-Verbaux du premier Congrès de Théologie Orthodoxe* (Athens, 1939), 171.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. G. Galitis, "Historisch-kritische Bibelwissenschaft und orthodoxe Theologie," *Etudes théologiques de Chambésy* 4 (1984), 116.

<sup>13</sup> About this matter see the analytic references in: K. Nikolakopoulos, "Grundprinzipien der orthodoxen patristischen Hermeneutik. Dissonanz oder Ergänzung zur historisch-kritischen Methode?," *Ofo* 14 (2000),

171-185.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Isidoros of Pelousion, *Epistle* 3, 292 (PG 78.695): Τὸν λαμπρᾶς ἀπτόμενον ὑποθέσεως, καὶ τὸν νοῦν τῶν Γραφῶν ἐρμηνεύσαι πειρώμενον, χρῆ τὴν μὲν γλῶτταν ἔχειν σεμνὴν τε καὶ τρανὴν, τὴν δὲ γνώμην εὐσεβῇ τε καὶ εὐαγῇ, ἀκολουθεῖν τε αὐταῖς, καὶ μὴ ἡγεῖσθαι, μηδὲ πρὸς τὸ οἰκεῖον βούλημα, τὸν ἐκείνων νοῦν ἐκβιάζεσθαι. Τοῖς γὰρ παραποιεῖν καὶ παρερμηνεύειν τολμῶσι, κίνδυνος ἐπήρτηται μέγιστος εἰς αὐτὴν τὴν ψυχὴν βλέπων.

<sup>15</sup> This is clear in the reference of Isidoros of Pelousion, *Epistle* 2 (PG 78.197): Ἐπιστημονικῶς τὴν Θεῖαν Γραφὴν ἀνελίσσειν ὀφείλεις, καὶ τὰς αὐτῆς δυνάμεις νουνεχῶς ἀνιχνεύειν, καὶ μὴ κατατολμᾶν ἀπλῶς τῶν ἀψαύστων καὶ ἀνεφίκτων μυστηρίων, ἀναξίους ταῦτα χερσὶν ἐπιτρέπων.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. H.J. Genthe, *Kleine Geschichte der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft* (Göttingen, 1977), 13.

<sup>17</sup> For some important references see M. Basarab, "Die kulturelle Dimension der Bibelhermeneutik und ihre Bedeutung für den Ost-West Dialog. Einige Bemerkungen," *Ofo* 14 (2000), 171-180.

<sup>18</sup> For the Western positions see G. Theissen and A. Merz, "Der umstrittene historische Jesus. Oder: Wie historisch ist der historische Jesus?" in *Jesus von Nazareth und das Christentum. Braucht die pluralistische Gesellschaft ein neues Jesusbild?* (ed. S. Daeske and P.R. Sahm; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2000), 171f.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. also J. Ratzinger, "Schriftauslegung im Widerstreit. Zur Frage nach Grundlagen und Weg der Exegese heute," in *Schriftauslegung im Widerstreit*, (ed. J. Ratzinger; Freiburg, 1989), 24ff.

<sup>20</sup> H.-W. Kuhn, "Qumran und Paulus. Unter traditionsgeschichtlichem Aspekt ausgewählte Parallelen," in *Das Urchristentum in seiner literarischen Geschichte, Festschrift für Jürgen Becker*, (ed. U. Mell and U.B. Müller; Berlin, 1999), 227, note 1.

<sup>21</sup> I refer the characteristic contention of the evangelical theologian G. Lüdemann, "Fakten und Fantasien in der neuen Jesus-Literatur und im Neuen Testament," in *Jesus von Nazareth und das Christentum. Braucht die pluralistische Gesellschaft ein neues Jesusbild?* (ed. S. Daeske and P.R. Sahm; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2000), 149: "The biblical narrations about Jesus are, according to my opinion, almost 15 percent real."

<sup>22</sup> In this connection I refer to the opinion of a modern Roman Catholic source: U. R. Lehramt, "Warnung vor religiösen Relativismus," *Herder Korrespondenz* 54 (2000), 494.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Rheinischer Merkur*, 13 (2000), 26.

<sup>24</sup> G. Lüdemann, *Jungfrauengeburt? Die wirkliche Geschichte von Maria und ihrem Sohn Jesus* (1997).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. G. Lüdemann, "Fakten und Fantasien in der neuen Jesus-Literatur und im Neuen Testament," in *Jesus von Nazareth und das Christentum: Braucht die pluralistische Gesellschaft ein neues Jesusbild?* (ed. S. Dae-ske and P.R. Sahm; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2000), 137.

<sup>26</sup> Mark 6:3: ὁ υἱὸς τῆς Μαρίας.

<sup>27</sup> Judg 11:1

<sup>28</sup> G. Lüdemann, "Fakten und Fantasien in der neuen Jesus-Literatur und im Neuen Testament," in *Jesus von Nazareth und das Christentum: Braucht die pluralistische Gesellschaft ein neues Jesusbild?* (ed. S. Dae-ske and P.R. Sahm; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2000), 140.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>30</sup> See, e.g., J. Frey, *Eugen Drewermann und die biblische Exegese. Eine methodisch-kritische Analyse*, WUNT II/71 (Tübingen, 1995).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Rev. C. Myron: "Ένας κληρικός αναστατώνει την Καθολική Έκκλησία." Eugen Drewermann, *Ορθόδοξη Παρουσία* 63 (1977), 61–65.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Interview with E. Drewermann *Der Spiegel*, 52 (1992), 61–74.

<sup>33</sup> G. Lüdemann, *Die Auferstehung Jesu. Historie, Erfahrung, Theologie* (Tübingen, 1994).

<sup>34</sup> G. Lüdemann, *Die Auferstehung Jesu. Historie, Erfahrung, Theologie* (Tübingen, 1994), 216.

<sup>35</sup> G. Lüdemann, "Fakten und Fantasien in der neuen Jesus-Literatur und im Neuen Testament," in *Jesus von Nazareth und das Christentum. Braucht die pluralistische Gesellschaft ein neues Jesusbild?* (ed. S. Dae-ske and P.R. Sahm; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2000), 149.

<sup>36</sup> Interview in *Der Spiegel*, 53 (1993), 139.

<sup>37</sup> Luke 24:13–35; Mark 16:12–13

<sup>38</sup> Cf. E. Drewermann and E. Biser, *Welches Credo?* (ed. M. Albus; Freiburg, 1993), 224.

<sup>39</sup> Heirmos of the ninth ode of the first canon of the assumption (15th August): νενίκηνται τῆς φύσεως οἱ ὄροι.

<sup>40</sup> 1 Cor 15:6.

<sup>41</sup> 1 Cor 15:17–18: εἰ δὲ Χριστὸς οὐκ ἐγήγερται, ματαία ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν, ἔτι ἐστὲ ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν, ἄρα καὶ οἱ κοιμηθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ ἀπώλονται. Note also the corresponding reflections in Carsten Peter Thiede, "Die Auferstehung Jesu – Fiktion oder Wirklichkeit? Ein Streitgespräch. Carsten Peter Thiede [versus] Gerd Lüdemann" (Basel, 2001), 44–45.

<sup>42</sup> G. Lüdemann, "Fakten und Fantasien in der neuen Jesus-Literatur und im Neuen Testament," in *Jesus von Nazareth und das Christentum. Braucht die pluralistische Gesellschaft ein neues Jesusbild?* (ed. S. Dae-ske and P.R. Sahm; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2000), 151.

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**Beyond *Theologia Crucis*: Jesus of Nazareth  
from Q to John via Paul (or John as a Radical  
Reinterpretation of Jesus of Nazareth)**

PETROS VASSILIADIS

**The Diversity of Christian Origins**

One of the major issues that will no doubt occupy our theological scholarship during the third millennium is the nature and the essence of Christianity. If I may put it quite directly, the issue at stake will be the choice between either its *soteriological* or *ecclesiological* character; either its personal and salvation-by-faith dimension or its communal one. In other words, the solution will depend on the emphasis one gives either to the Pauline version of the Christian *kerygma*, as well as his interpretation of Jesus of Nazareth with its climax in the famous *theologia crucis*, or the Johannine understanding of the mystery of incarnate Word and its eucharistic conception of reality.

This presentation is my first attempt to examine the theological trajectory from the very early stages of the Christian literary activity to the composition of the Gospel of John. It is based on some recent articles and scholarly contributions of mine on Q, Paul, and John.<sup>1</sup> It is my humble tribute to Professor Savas Agourides, the Orthodox biblical scholar who has been striving for nearly two generations to decipher the profound meaning of John the Theologian, the prototype of Orthodox theology. Professor Agourides was my mentor in biblical studies and the scholar who courageously wrote the critical report for my doctoral dissertation on the Q-Document.<sup>2</sup>

The scene is now becoming more or less clear after the great progress made in the biblical field, especially in the field of the Synoptic Gospel tradition, and more precisely in the study of Q. Progress has accrued not so much in terms of historical critical analysis of the earliest Gospel accounts, i.e., as a solution to the Synoptic problem, but in terms of the impact this analysis has had on the conventional picture of Christian origins that dominated biblical scholarship for almost a century. The second source of the Synoptic tradition, known as Q, which no serious study can now ignore, seems to expound a radically different theological view than that of the mainstream *kerygmatic* expression of the early Church. Along with the discovery of the Gospel of Thomas, the existence of an early "Christian" document designated Q by scholars, a document with a semi-canonical status, provides a vastly different perspective. The Q-Document lacks not only (a) a historical structure of *Jesus' life* of a Gospel type, i.e., with a "Passion and Resurrection story," but also (b) any reference to the *soteriological significance of Jesus' death*.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, it "challenges the assumption that the early Church was unanimous in making Jesus' death and resurrection the fulcrum of Christian faith."<sup>4</sup> The results of recent research on Q have "revealed the complexity of early Christian literary activity and also contributed to a reassessment of the originating impulse(s) of the whole Christian movement."<sup>5</sup>

In fact, the challenge of Q to the conventional picture of Christian origins, and by extension also to the quest of the historical Jesus, and the predominance of the Pauline interpretation of the Christ event, is more far-reaching than the making of a little room for yet "another Gospel," or another early Christian community, and so on. If Q is taken seriously into account, the entire landscape of early Christianity with all that it entails may need to be radically revised or at least thoroughly reconsidered.<sup>6</sup>



Of course, there have been voices from the discipline of archeology for some time now<sup>7</sup> pointing out that the extant archaeological evidence supports this view.<sup>8</sup> But no one (or very few) could have ever listened to them. Biblical scholarship was not ready to review or put to the test the conventional picture of early Christianity. Yet, more than a generation ago a number of scholars from all Christian traditions tried to reflect upon, and analyze, the origin of the *theological significance of Jesus' death*.<sup>9</sup> They all illustrated that there was no unanimity among the first Christians with regard to the interpretation of Jesus' death on the cross. In fact, there was a considerable variety of attempts to give a theological interpretation to this significant and unique event in the divine plan of salvation.<sup>10</sup>

Besides the so-called "soteriological" interpretation, according to which the *raison d'être* of Jesus' death on the cross was the salvation of humankind, one can count at least another four crystallized interpretative attempts, with which the early Christian community attempted to grasp the mystery of Jesus' death on the cross:

(a) The "prophetic" interpretation,<sup>11</sup> according to which Jesus' death had no expiatory significance, being rather the true continuation of the persecution, sufferings, and violent end of the Old Testament prophets.

(b) The "dialectic" interpretation,<sup>12</sup> according to which Jesus' death was dialectically contrasted<sup>13</sup> to the resurrection with the stress being more or less laid on the latter, and implying no soteriological connection to the cross.

(c) The "apocalyptic" or "eschatological" interpretation,<sup>14</sup> where too Jesus' death is seen as having no soteriological significance but rather as being an eschatological act in full agreement with the divine plan.

(d) And finally the "eucharistic" or "covenantal" interpretation,<sup>15</sup> pointing as well to other than the expiatory significance of Jesus' death. Here his blood seals the new covenant

that God established with his people.

The almost unanimous preference in the later New Testament literature given to the "soteriological" interpretation, which of course can surely be traced to the period before Paul's conversion (cf. 1 Cor 15:3ff.), was "due to its hellenistic background, compared with the more or less Jewish background of all the other interpretations... The lack of any reference in other pre-pauline strata of the early Christian tradition... suggests a limited usage in the early Christian community. On the other hand, the prophetic interpretation, traces of which are found in almost all layers of primitive Christianity (Q-community, Hellenistic community, Markan community, Pauline community), suggests that it was widespread during this creative period".<sup>16</sup>

In successive articles a few years ago I argued that, the time has come for scholarly research to distance itself as much as possible from the dominant scholarly syndrome of the priority of the *texts* over the *experience*, and *theology* over *ecclesiology*. There are many scholars who cling to this dogma, imposed by the post-Enlightenment and post-Reformation hegemony over all scholarly theological work. This approach can be summarized as follows. What constitutes the basis of any historical investigation, the core of Christian faith, cannot be extracted but from given texts (and/or archeological evidence<sup>17</sup>), from the expressed theological views, from a certain *depositum fidei* (be it the Bible, the Church (or apostolic) Tradition). Very rarely is there any serious reference to the eucharistic/eschatological experience that preceded them, in fact, from the communion-event which was responsible for and produced these texts and views.<sup>18</sup>

These views were met with some skepticism on the basis of a suspicion of a latent return to the pre-critical approach to the Gospels and additional questions about my previously expressed postmodern concerns.<sup>19</sup> I do not hide my discon-

tent with modernism, at least because it has over-rationalized everything from social life to scholarship, from emotion to imagination, seeking to excessively control and constrict the irrational, the aesthetic and perhaps even the sacred. In the search to rationalize and historicize all, modernism has transformed not only what we know and how we know it, but also how we understand ourselves. Hence the longing by a wide range of intellectuals for wholeness, for community, for *Gemeinschaft*, for an antidote to the fragmentation and sterility of an overly technocratic society, and at the end of the road a consent to postmodernism.

Having said all this, it is important to reaffirm what sociologists of knowledge very often point out: that modernism, counter-modernism, postmodernism, and even de-modernism, are always simultaneous processes. Otherwise postmodernism can easily end up as a neo-traditionalism that neglects or even negates the great achievements of the Enlightenment and the ensuing critical order and of course the democratic structure of our modern society.<sup>20</sup>

I felt obliged to say these things and reaffirm that all I argue for is the priority of the eschatological *experience* of the early Christian community over against its *literary products*. I admit of course at the same time that very early, even from the time of St. Paul, there has been a shift – no matter for what reasons<sup>21</sup> – of the center of gravity from the *eucharistic experience* to the *Christian message*, from *eschatology* to *Christology* (and consequently to *soteriology*), from the *event* (the *kingdom of God*), to the *bearer and center* of this event (*Christ*, and more precisely his sacrifice on the cross). However, my view is that the horizontal-eschatological perspective always remained predominant in the early Church, both in the New Testament and in most of the subsequent Christian literature. The vertical-soteriological view was always understood within the context of the horizontal-eschatological perspective as supplemental and complementary.<sup>22</sup>

This, however, is not something uncommon, even among the most fervent supporters of modernism within biblical scholarship of our time. More and more scholarly studies come out advocating the priority of the “eucharistic” conduct and/or “common meal” eschatological anticipation of Jesus’ Jewish contemporaries, of Jesus himself “eating together” with his disciples, and of course of the early Christian community.<sup>23</sup> This wide recognition of the importance of the Eucharist in dealing with Christian origins has brought a new dimension to the understanding of its earliest stages. We are talking, of course, of the Eucharist neither in the sense of a mystery cult, nor as a mere ritual, but as the living expression of the ecclesial identity of the early Christian community, an expression of a *koinonia* of the eschata, and a proleptic manifestation of the kingdom of God, a vivid act of a community living in a new reality.

The issue at stake, therefore, is how the *ritual* developed into a *story*. To put it in different terms, how the transmission of the Jesus-tradition moved from an *eschatological*, experiential, didactic (sophiological?)<sup>24</sup> pattern to a *historical* narrative of the Markan type. How can one explain the trajectory of Jesus’ traditions from a (non-Pauline) *logia* literary genre (Q and Thomas) to a *story* literary genre (Mark and then the rest of the canonical Gospels). In addition, one cannot ignore that Paul did not care about the *Jesus of history* (2 Cor 5:16ff.), and yet *Mark* theologically produced a Gospel of a Pauline type.

Before the consolidation of the Q hypothesis, everything was centered on the assumption of a soteriological emphasis from the very beginning of Christian origins. According to this explanation the trajectory went as follows: from the soteriological significance of Jesus of Nazareth, to Paul, to post-Pauline Christianity (Gospels), and then on to Catholic/Orthodox Christianity.

After the consolidation and the almost unanimous accep-

tance of the Q hypothesis, an alternative explanation can be convincingly advanced. And this explanation places a great deal of importance on the assumption of the priority of the eschatological teaching of Jesus of Nazareth re-enacted and performed around the "common meal" eschatological fellowships expressing the "eucharistic" perspective of the Christian community. According to this explanation the early Christian community developed in two trajectories:

(1) The kingdom-of-God teaching of the historical Jesus, to Q, to James, to the Didache, to Thomas, and then on to marginal Christian groups, especially to Gnostic Christianity.

(2) The kingdom-of-God teaching of the historical Jesus, to Paul, to Mark, to the rest of the canonical Gospels, to Acts, and then on to early Orthodox Christianity.

It is quite interesting that the later Catholic/Orthodox Christianity preserved both the eucharistic/eschatological element, prominent in the first trajectory, and the soteriological/christological one, around which the second trajectory developed.

With regard to the relations between Mark and Q, I rejected in an earlier study all the proposed solutions (either of direct dependence one way or the other, or mutual independence) and suggested that Mark did "have *knowledge of Q-traditions*... he was *acquainted with the Q-Document* itself... [he did not] *derive* any material therefrom... [because] his attitude to the Q-materials [was] critical."<sup>25</sup> This might have been due to Q's non-soteriological motifs and perhaps to its lack of a *theologia-crucis* orientation on which the entire Pauline tradition was so dependent.

I take for granted the findings of some cultural anthropologists, that in Israel, like in all societies and religious systems, the connection between ritual and story was fundamental. The main story of the Jewish people, the exodus from Egypt, was ritually reenacted in Israel's major festival, the Passover, and the main promise of Yahweh to his people, i.e. his uni-

lateral covenant to all descendants of Abraham and later to Jacob (Israel), was reenacted in rituals and offerings during all their annual festivals. We also know that these promises of the blessings of that covenant had been a *hope rather than a reality*, which nevertheless stayed alive and was constantly renewed up to the time of the historical Jesus. In all its forms (Isaianic, Danielic, Enochic, or Qumranic) this hope was celebrated around the common meals in anticipation of the coming of the messianic meal with the anointed priest and/or the anointed king. And there were numerous prophets during Jesus' time, who attempted to reenact or to prepare for the messianic liberation of Israel.

Coming now to Jesus of Nazareth there is good evidence in all Gospel accounts that he, too, celebrated common meals with his disciples and friends, and this not only because he certainly was a devoted Jew, "marginal" or not. And there is no reason to doubt that the early Christian communities celebrated common meals in anticipation of the eschatological/messianic reality. Most probably the Christian community's meals had their origin in meals that Jesus celebrated with his disciples.<sup>26</sup>

There is a growing awareness among most biblical and liturgical scholars working on the original form of the eucharistic accounts of the New Testament that Jesus' last meal, as well as the other common meals, must have been understood in *eschatological* rather than *soteriological* terms; that is, as anticipation of the banquet of God with his people in the kingdom of God. Whatever soteriological significance was later attached to them was certainly understood only within this eschatological perspective, never outside it.

It is not only (1) the apparent eschatological orientation of the overall "institution narratives" in all their forms (Marcan/Matthaeian and Pauline/Lucan). It is also clear that (2) the saying pertaining to the *cup* in its oldest form was not centered on the content of the cup (the wine, and further

through the sacrificial meaning of Jesus' blood, on its soteriological significance), but on the cup as the symbol of the new covenant;<sup>27</sup> and above all, (3) the *bread* in its original meaning was not connected with Jesus' crucified body, but had ecclesiological connotations, starting as a symbol of the eschatological community. Justin Taylor has convincingly argued for the eschatological importance of the "breaking of the bread" in early Christianity.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps the intermediate stage in the overall process was the Pauline image of the "body of Christ."

The story of Jesus' suffering and death remained fluid for a long time. Evidence for this is the different versions of the Passion narrative in the Gospel literature, owing to the oral performance of the story in ritual celebrations. As the early faithful in their ritual celebrations were reading again and again the Old Testament lessons and then told the story of Jesus' death, the Passion story was enriched by scriptural language.

At this stage Paul's theological interpretation of Jesus' death through his famous *theologia crucis*, his major contribution to Christianity, played a catalytic role. In view of the idea that, it is stories that create nations, and more precisely stories that can function as a founding element in any religious system, the *story* of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection, and by extension the Gospel narratives, proved to be a significant factor in the development of Christianity. In this way the original *eschatological* dimension was able to survive and have a lasting impact in the course of history. The new eschatological community, which expressed its identity in *eucharistic ritual*, could only be nourished and sustained by this version of the story, namely the Passion narrative, a version derived from ritual, and which in turn ultimately has its roots in the commensal practices of Jesus.

The *theologia crucis*, the story, and the soteriological interpretation of Jesus' death in the course of history even-

tually overwhelmed the earlier ethical, eucharistic, and eschatological understanding of Christian identity. Ironically enough, the same process was in force in the understanding of the sacrament of the Eucharist, where for most of the time the personalistic and soteriological elements overwhelmed the prominent eschatological and ecclesiological ones; not as deviation and corrupted additional elements, but as a necessary part of a survival process. What, however, became quite damaging for the future of Christian theology was its elevation after the Reformation to an absolute approach to the Christian faith.

And here the other, equally unique, contribution of the early Christian community, namely the Johannine radical interpretation of Jesus of Nazareth, needs to be taken into consideration. The importance of Johannine theology, so badly overlooked in modernity as a tool for the proper understanding of the Christian identity, and completely ignored as a contribution to all quests for the historical Jesus, may need to be reconsidered.

### **The Johannine Contribution**

The Gospel of John (hereafter GJ) is unique in religious literature, because it challenges the conventional approach to many religious issues. Ironically, it is also the theological treatise that has shaped the identity and self-understanding of the Christian Church, thus becoming *the* Gospel of Christianity. It is not only its “transcendent theology concerning Jesus,”<sup>29</sup> which determined the Christian doctrine, but its profound reflection on Jesus of Nazareth through its eucharistic theology. The originality of ideas of GJ provoked strong controversy in early Christianity. This controversy continued in the modern era, though for quite different reasons. It gained recognition, respect and renewed consideration only in postmodernity. For whereas in modernity the



focus of biblical theology with regard to Jesus tradition has mainly focused on the Synoptic Gospels, now in postmodernity more emphasis is given to the Johannine tradition.

GJ presupposes the Synoptic tradition but moves beyond its logic, as well as beyond some of the earlier (Pauline) theological views. Theologically it approaches the enduring problems of history, human destiny, death, and salvation starting not from anthropology but rather from *Christology*.<sup>30</sup> Christology in GJ, however, cannot to be understood apart from its *Pneumatology*, since “the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit” (14:26), according to GJ’s terminology, can be easily defined as the “alter ego” of Christ (“and I will ask my father and he will give you another Paraclete so that he might remain with you always” (14:16). This other Paraclete who “will teach you all things” (14:26) is “the Spirit of truth” (14:17; 15:26; 16:13); and in the final analysis the one who will “guide you into all the truth” (16:12). Consequently human beings are in communion with “the way, the truth and the life,” who is Christ, only through the Holy Spirit, whom he bestows upon the world as a gift of God the Father.<sup>31</sup> The crucial question, of course, is how and on what condition one can become bearer of the Spirit. In answering this question modern exegetes are dramatically divided. Conservative scholars insist that according to GJ this can only happen within the Church through the sacraments, whereas liberal critics argue that it is in keeping the word of God and being in communion with Christ that salvation can be accomplished.

In GJ the Christian community (i.e. the Church), just as in the early Christian tradition, is not perceived as an institution, an organization with defined or set doctrines, and/or a specific social order. Rather, it is understood as communion with Christ, just as Christ is in communion with the Father, when believers keep Christ’s word and believe in him who had sent him (10:30; 17:21ff.). They are “of the truth” when they hear his voice, just as the sheep hear the voice of the

good shepherd (10:1ff). All these happen, when they change their lives, i.e. when they are born from above (3:3), by the Spirit (3:5ff.). But this birth by the Spirit, unlike natural birth, is the work of God that no one can control, just as happens with the wind. "The Spirit blows where he wills, [just as mysteriously and freely as the wind], and you hear its sound but you do not know from where it comes or where it goes. Thus it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (3:8). For this reason the proper worship of the community has to be "in spirit and in truth" (4:24).

This distinctly charismatic ecclesiological view, however, alternates with a number of seemingly strong sacramental references, which were so far either rejected in modern scholarship as later additions or interpolations, or explained in a conventional "sacramentalistic," i.e. pre-modern, way. As a matter of fact, there is no other issue that has so divided modern scholarship than the sacramental or non-sacramental character of the GJ.<sup>32</sup> The debate is usually supported by its apparent silence regarding baptism and Eucharist, and by some passages that seem to speak in a veiled or symbolic manner. In my view, the issue at stake is whether the various "sacramental" references, are at all related to the "sacramentalistic" views of the ancient Hellenistic mystery cults contemporary to the early Church,<sup>33</sup> or have much more dynamic connotations, i.e., whether they actually stand as a further reflection on the traditional (Pauline and Synoptic) understanding of the Eucharist, thus being a radical reinterpretation of the Christian identity.

Although the GJ omits the words of institution of the Eucharist, it is rightly considered the "sacramental" book *par excellence*.<sup>34</sup> The miraculous change of the water into wine at the wedding in Cana (2:1-11) at the outset of Jesus' earthly ministry, the symbolism of the vine and the branches in the "Farewell Discourse" (ch. 15), the flow of blood and water from the pierced side of the crucified Jesus (19:34)

and so many other elements make the sacramental, or rather eucharistic, character of the GJ inescapable. Of course, the most discussed units in this respect are chapter 6 with its "Eucharistic Discourse" (especially 6:51b-58); the washing of the disciples' feet, which actually replaces the Synoptic account of the institution of the Eucharist, and in fact the entire chapter 13; the anointing of Jesus in 12:1ff; and the so-called "High-Priestly Prayer" in chapter 17, as a model of eucharistic prayer and a plea for the unity of humankind. I will briefly analyze these pericopes, starting with what I consider to be the indispensable theological framework of 11:51-52.

It has long been recognized that the GJ claims that the ultimate gifts of God, usually associated with the end times of history, are already accessible to the believer "in Christ." This claim is made, however, without compromising the future dimension of those gifts. The GJ seems to insist that these eschatological realities are present in the life of the believer, although there is still a future and unfulfilled quality to them. In doing this, it invites the readers to turn their attention from the future to the present quality of Christian existence. Nevertheless, it perfectly keeps the balance between the present and the future, giving the impression that it attempts to correct an excessively futurist orientation, without dispensing with the future altogether.

This ambivalence is, in fact, evident in the entire teaching, and especially the life and work, of the Jesus of history, all of which cannot be properly understood without a reference to the messianic expectations of Judaism, i.e., the coming of a Messiah, who in the "last days" of history (*eschaton*) would establish his kingdom by calling all the dispersed and afflicted people of God into one place to become one body united around him. The idea of "gathering into one place the scattered people of God and of all the nations," coupled with the descent of God's Spirit upon the sons and daughters of

God, is found in the prophetic tradition,<sup>35</sup> and is also evident in the early Christian literature.<sup>36</sup> And here a statement in GJ – generally overlooked in modern biblical scholarship – about the role of the Messiah is extremely important. In that statement the author of GJ interprets the words of the Jewish high priest by affirming that “he prophesied that Jesus should die...not for the nation only, but to *gather into one* the children of God who are scattered abroad” (11:51-52).

Jesus of Nazareth, therefore, identified himself with the Messiah of the end times, who would be the center of the gathering of the dispersed people of God. It was on this radical eschatological teaching about the kingdom of God that the early Christian community developed its theology, ecclesiology, spirituality, and its mission. It was exactly this gathering that has ever since been reenacted in the liturgical practice of the Eucharist. Already in the writings of Paul it was stated that all who believe in Christ are incorporated into the one people of God and mystically united into his body through Baptism. The GJ has further developed this teaching in regard to the unity of the people of God by pointing out that this incorporation into Christ’s body takes place in the Eucharist, a significant identity act which was seen not as a mystery cult but as a foretaste of the expected eschatological Kingdom.

To understand the overall Johannine eucharistic theology one has undoubtedly to start from chapter 6.<sup>37</sup> The entire chapter begins with three wondrous deeds: the feeding of the multitude, the walking of Jesus on the sea, and the landing of the boat (6:1–21). Then a lengthy discourse on the “bread of life” follows, where Jesus makes high claims for himself consistent with the announcement of his prologue (1:1-18). The result is a division among his hearers, which finds many who had believed now leaving him (6:22–71).

There is no doubt that the author obviously wanted to set the Christ event within the framework of the Exodus-

Passover theme. In the Johannine Passion story Jesus is made to die at the very time the lambs are being slaughtered in preparation for the Passover meal of the same evening (19:14). The symbolism suggests that Christ is to be viewed as the new Passover lamb by which God liberates humanity from oppression, just as Israel was freed from slavery in Egypt.

This Passover framework, however, is interpreted through clear sacramental references. Only the passage of the walking of Jesus on the sea (6:16-21) seems to be outside this scheme. But this is probably due to the fact that this very unit was preserved in the earlier Synoptic tradition (Mark 6:30-52; Matt 14:13-27), coupled with the account of the multiplication of loaves. At any rate, the entire discourse on the "bread of life" (6:22ff.) is a continuation of, and a commentary on, the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, which, by the way, had already been given in the Synoptic tradition an accented eucharistic dimension (Mark. 6:41).<sup>38</sup>

In general, if Paul and the Synoptic Gospels underline the significance of the soteriological/sacramental understanding of the Eucharist, i.e., via the Pauline *theologia crucis*, it was GJ that went beyond this *theologia crucis* and gave it a life-orientated understanding. By doing so, it underlined a completely different dimension to the Christ event, thus pointing to another direction in the so-called quest for the historical Jesus. Without losing its connection with Jesus' death (cf. John 19:34), the eschatological meal of the community in GJ is essentially distanced from death and associated rather with life ("the bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the *life* of the world," [6:51; see also 6:33, 58]). The antithesis between bread and manna illustrates perfectly this truth; for whereas the Jews who had eaten the manna in the desert died, those who partake of the true bread will have life eternal (6:58, 33).

Reading carefully through the entire Johannine eucharistic

discourse (6:22-71), a clear change of vocabulary and content in vv. 51b-58 is more than evident.<sup>39</sup> In these verses faith in Christ is no longer the basic presupposition for eternal life ("he who believes in me has eternal life. I am the bread of life" [6:47-48; cf. also 6:35]); eternal life now is linked with eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ ("Truly truly, if you do not *eat the flesh* of the Son of Man and *drink his blood* you will not have life in yourselves. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life... he who eats me, shall live by me," [6:54f, 57]). However, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>40</sup> the profound meaning of these sayings is given by the concluding remark of v. 6:56: "those who eat my flesh and drink my blood *abide in me, and I in them*." With these words GJ denotes an unbroken relationship, communion, and abiding presence of God, which surpass both the Hellenistic concept of "ecstasy," and at the same time the classical conception of the Jewish prophecy, because it transforms the eschatological expectation from a future event to a present reality. It also avoids any trace of pantheism, since there is no hint of the idea of "identification" of the initiate with the deity, the principal teaching of the mystery cults.

Here we have the beginnings of what has become axiomatic in later Christian tradition: to have "eternal life" – in other words to live an authentic and not conventional life – one has to be in communion with Christ. Communion with Christ, however, means participation in the perfect communion which exists between the Father and the Son ("Just as the living Father sent me, and I live through the Father, s/he who eats me will live through me," [John 6:57]). What we have here in GJ is in fact a parallel expression to what has become in later patristic literature the biblical foundation of the doctrine of *theosis* (divinization; cf. the classic statement of 2 Pet 1:4). In the case of GJ, however, this idea is expressed in a more dynamic and less abstract way.

Taking this argument a little further, one can say that GJ

further develops an understanding of the Eucharist as the unceasingly repeated act of sealing the “new covenant” of God with his new people. This interpretation is, of course, evidenced also in the earlier Synoptic and Pauline tradition, although there the covenantal interpretation of Jesus’ death in the phrase “this is my blood of the *covenant*” (Mark 14:24, et al.; 1 Cor 11:25), is somewhat hidden by the soteriological formula “which is shed *for you*” (ibid).

This eucharistic theology of GJ, with the direct emphasis on the idea of the *covenant* and of *communion*, is in fact in accordance with the prophet Jeremiah’s vision, which was at the same time also a promise. Just as in Jeremiah, so also in GJ, it is the idea of a *new covenant*, of *communion*, and of the Church as a *people*, that are most strongly emphasized.<sup>41</sup>

Through this covenantal eucharistic dimension, the GJ does not only go beyond the *teologia crucis*; it also develops other important characteristics. It deals with both the profound meaning of the act of identity in the Eucharistic celebration of the early Christian community and with the question of who Jesus of Nazareth actually was. The pericope of the “Washing of the Disciples’ Feet” (13:1-20) is a key pericope in this respect. The incident in question, which is preserved only in the GJ, is placed in the context of the Last Supper, and in direct connection with Judas’ betrayal. In other words, in the same place the Synoptic Gospels have all recorded the dominical sayings of the institution of the Eucharist (Mark 14:22-25). Given GJ’s almost certain knowledge of the Synoptic tradition, one can fairly argue that its author obviously replaced the account of the institution of the Eucharist with the symbolic act of Jesus’ washing of his disciples’ feet. A careful reading of the reference to the new commandment of love (13:34-15), in the same context, brings immediately to the reader’s mind the institution narrative. The “*new commandment*” sounds very similar to the “*new covenant*” of the institution narratives of the Synoptic tradition.

In sum, GJ understands the Eucharist not as a mere “cultic” and “sacramental” act, but primarily as a diaconal act and an alternative way of life with apparent social implications. For in those days the washing of a disciple’s feet was more than an ultimate act of humble service and kenotic diakonia; it was an act of radical social behavior, in fact, a rite of inversion of roles within the society.<sup>42</sup> To this should be added Jesus’ admonition to his disciples and through them to his Church: “For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15). The diaconal implication of the Johannine understanding of the Eucharist becomes quite evident.

It is almost an assured result of modern biblical and liturgical scholarship that the Eucharist was “lived” in the early Christian community as a foretaste of the coming kingdom of God. It was experienced as a proleptic manifestation, within the tragic realities of history, of an authentic life of communion, unity, justice and equality, entailing no practical differentiation (soteriological and beyond) between men and women.

If this was the original meaning of the Eucharist, then the redaction by GJ of another ritually significant pericope, and closely related to the “eucharistic” incident of the “washing of the disciples’ feet,” namely that of the “Anointing of Jesus” (John 12:1ff.), may not be accidental. GJ not only placed this famous pericope in the same Passover setting as the pericope of the “Washing of the Disciples’ Feet” (John 13:1ff.); it also replaced the unknown woman by Mary, a figure from within Jesus’ most beloved family of Lazarus. In fact, Mary is presented in contrast with her sister Martha, who, according to an account in Luke’s Gospel was “anxious and troubled about many things [except] the one thing... needful” (Luke 10:41). What is, however, even more important for our case is the transfer of the original anointing of Jesus’ hair (Mark 14:3/Matt 26:7, originally understood as a



prophetic act of messianic character), to Jesus' feet (12:3).<sup>43</sup> In this way GJ proleptically anticipates Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet. By so doing, the "disciple of love" changed an act of "witness" into an act of "diakonia."

Before closing my reflections on GJ it is necessary to say a few words about ch.17, the famous "High-Priestly (Eucharistic?) Prayer," ultimately understood as a prayer for the unity of humankind. It is commonly accepted that GJ is structured according to two major parts: the "Book of Signs" (chs. 1–12) and the "Book of Glory" (chs. 13–20). Both of them are centered around the notion of Jesus' "glorification," of his "hour." Whereas in the first part Jesus' "hour has not come" (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20), in the second part the presence of the "hour," Jesus' death and resurrection, is clearly affirmed (John 13:1; 17:1). In this second part GJ presents Jesus addressing his disciples alone (13–17), and narrates, but at the same time reflects on, Jesus' Passion and Resurrection (18–21).

John 14–16, the so-called "Farewell Discourse," deal with Jesus' final instructions to his disciples. They consist of a mosaic of themes introduced, explored, dropped, and reintroduced, the central point being the promise of the sending of the "Paraclete," "the Spirit of Truth," the first serious pneumatological reflection in Christian literature.

Nevertheless, the most important part is undoubtedly ch. 17, "Jesus' High-Priestly Prayer" for his disciples. However, Jesus' prayer in ch. 17 is not only a prayer on behalf of his disciples and their theosis in his glorification, but is also "on behalf of those who will believe in [Christ] through their word" (17:20). All the motifs and symbols used in this chapter remind us of the "Eucharistic Prayer," the *anaphora* of the later Christian liturgy, which as a "reasonable worship" and "bloodless sacrifice" is being offered not only for the Christian community itself, but also for the *oekoumene*, "for the life of the whole world." In addition, the basic aim of

Jesus' prayer is "that they may all be one" (17:21ff.), and it is by extension an appeal for the unity of humankind. It is characteristic that the whole argument is being developed on the model of the perfect unity that exists between Christ and his Father, i.e. the unity that exists within the Holy Trinity ("as you, Father, are in me and I am in you," (John 17:21), "that they may be one, as we are one," 7:22). It is not accidental that the Eucharist, the Church's mystery *par excellence*, is also an expression of the ultimate act of unity; nor is it accidental that it is a rite of glory, experienced as such in almost all Christian traditions, though more distinctly in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Therefore, if any conclusion is to be drawn from this affirmation of the ecclesial and diaconal dimension of the Eucharist in GJ, this is, so I believe, a radical reinterpretation of the picture of the Jesus of Nazareth as presented in the Pauline (and Synoptic) tradition through the famous *theologia crucis*.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> P. Vassiliadis, "Paul's *theologia crucis* as an Intermediate Stage of the Trajectory from Q to Mark," in *Atti del VII Simposio di Tarso su S. Paolo Apostolo*, (ed. L. Padovese; Rome, 2002), 43-52; and idem "John II. With Special Reference to the Eucharist," in *Global Bible Commentary*, (ed. Daniel Patte; Abingdon Press, forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> Η περί της Πηγής των Λογίων Θεωρία. Κριτική θεώρησης των συγχρόνων φιλολογικών και θεολογικών προβλημάτων της Πηγής των Λογίων (Athens, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> cf. P. Vassiliadis, ΛΟΓΟΙ ΙΗΣΟΥ. *Studies in Q*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (London: SCM, 1990), 86.

<sup>5</sup> H. W. Attridge, "Reflections on Research into Q," *Semeia* 55 (1991): 223-34.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. P. Vassiliadis, "Pauline Theology, the Origins of Christianity and the Challenge of Q. A Personal Journey," in *Atti del V Simposio di Tarso su S. Paolo Apostolo*, (ed. L. Padovese; Rome, 1998), 41-60.

<sup>7</sup> Graydon Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine* (Mercer, GA, 1985). cf. also L. M. White's more recent two-volume work in the Harvard Theological Studies series, entitled *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture*, vol. 1, *Building God's House in the Roman World: Architectural Adaptations Among Pagans, Jews and Christians*, and vol. 2, *Texts and Monuments for the Christian Domus Ecclesiae in its Environment* (Valley Forge, 1996-1997).

<sup>8</sup> G. Snyder, for example, has pointed out that "from 180 to 400 artistic analogies of self-giving, suffering, sacrifice, or incarnation are totally missing. The suffering Christ on a cross first appeared in the fifth century, and then not very convincingly." Snyder, of course, interprets these exemplars of early Christian iconography as representative of *popular* Christian religion as opposed to *official* Christian religion, simply because as an archaeologist he did not scrutinize theologically his extraordinary findings. "There is no place in the third century [or earlier] for a crucified Christ, or a symbol of divine death. Only when Christ was all powerful, as in the iconography of the Emperor, could that strength be used for redemption and salvation as well as deliverance" (G. Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 29).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. H. Kessler, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu. Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Düsseldorf, 1970); *Der Tod Jesu. Deutungen im Neuen Testament* (ed. K. Kertelge; Freiburg, 1976); O. Knoch, "Zur Diskussion über die Heilsbedeutung des Todes Jesu," *Theologisches Jahrbuch* 1977/78 (Leipzig, 1978); G. Dellings, *Der Kreuzestod Jesu in der urchristlichen Verkündigung* (Göttingen, 1972); M. Hengel, *The Atonement: The Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament* (Philadelphia, 1981); F.-J. Orttemper, *Das Kreuz in der Verkündigung des Apostels Paulus dargestellt an den Texten der paulinischen Hauptbriefe* (Stuttgart, 1967); J. Roloff, "Anfänge der soteriologischen Deutung des Todes Jesu (Mk X.45 und Lk XXII.27)," *NTS* 19 (1972), 38-64; M.-L. Gubler, *Die frühesten Deutungen des Todes Jesu. Eine motivgeschichtliche Darstellung auf Grund der neueren exegetischen Forschung* (Fribourg, 1977); and P. Vassiliadis, *Cross and Salvation: The Soteriological Background of St. Paul's Teaching about the Cross in the Light of the Pre-Pauline Interpretation of Jesus' Death* (in Greek) (Thessaloniki, 1983), an English summary of which can be found in "Σταυρός: Centre of the Pauline Soteriology and Apostolic Ministry," in *L'Apôtre Paul. Personnalité, Style et Conception du Ministère*, (ed. A. Vanhoye; Leuven, 1986), 246-253.

<sup>10</sup> P. Vassiliadis, *Cross and Salvation*, 47ff.

<sup>11</sup> Traces of the "prophetic" interpretation are found in the earliest pauline epistle (1 Thess 2:15), Acts (7:52), the Marcan tradition (cf. Mark

12:1-12), and the Q-Document.

<sup>12</sup> This is found in the earliest and most traditional strata of Acts (2:23ff.; 2:32ff.; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:39ff.) and the pauline literature (1 Thess 4:14; Rom 8:34; 14:19a; 2 Cor 13:4).

<sup>13</sup> J. Roloff ("Anfänge der soteriologischen Deutung," 39) calls it *Kontrastschema*.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the synoptic passion predictions (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. the earliest layers of the eucharistic tradition both in Paul and the Synoptic Gospels (1 Cor 11:25; also Mark 10:45a; Luke 22:37b; 12:37b).

<sup>16</sup> *Cross and Salvation*, 58.

<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, note the remarks above in notes 4 and 5.

<sup>18</sup> P. Vassiliadis, "The Challenge of Q. The Cynic Hypothesis," *ΑΟΓΟΙ ΙΗΣΟΥ. Studies in Q*, 151f. cf. also idem, "Pauline Theology, the Origins of Christianity and the Challenge of Q," 57; and "The Eucharistic Perspective of the Church's Mission," *Eucharist and Witness: Orthodox Perspectives on the Unity and Mission of the Church* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 49-66.

<sup>19</sup> P. Vassiliadis, "Prolegomena to Theology of the New Testament" (in Greek), *Deltion Biblikon Meleton* 19 (2000): 5-21. cf. also my recent book, *Postmodernity and the Church* (in Greek) (Athens: Akritas Publications, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> The rationalistic sterility of modern life has turned to the quest for something new, something radical, which nevertheless is not always new, but very often old recycled: neo-romanticism, neo-mysticism, naturalism, etc. In fact, all these neo-isms share a great deal in common with the early 18<sup>th</sup>-century reactions to the modernist revolution.

<sup>21</sup> Bruce Chilton, in *A Feast of Meanings: Eucharistic Theologies from Jesus through Johannine Circles* (Leiden, 1994), has discerned six such paradigm shifts from Jesus' time to the Johannine circles. D. Passakos, in *Eucharist and Mission* (in Greek) (Athens, 1997), 267, has analyzed this "paradigm shift" at the crucial moment of early Christianity and claimed that "the Eucharist in Paul" was understood not only as an icon of the eschata, but also as a missionary event with cosmic and social consequences. The Eucharist for him was not only the sacrament of the Church, but also the sacrament of the world. Within the Pauline communities the Eucharist had a double orientation (in contrast to the overall eschatological and otherworldly dimension of it in earlier tradition): "toward the world as *diastolic* movement, and toward God as a *systolic* movement." According to Passakos "the Eucharist for Paul is at the same time an experience of the eschata and a movement toward the eschata" (268).

<sup>22</sup> This is why the liturgical experience of the early Church is incomprehensible without its social dimension (see Acts 2:42ff., 1 Cor 11:1ff., Heb 13:10-16; Justin, *I Apology* 67; Irenaeus, *Adver. Her.* 18.1, etc.).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. H. Koester's recent lecture on "Story and Ritual in Greece, Rome and Early Christianity," <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/symposium/story.html>. Also B. Chilton, *A Feast of Meanings*; and E. Nodet and J. Taylor, *The Origins of Christianity: An Exploration* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> My argument in what follows is not affected by the dispute over the priority in Q of the wisdom or apocalyptic element. More on this in J. S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections* (Philadelphia, 1987).

<sup>25</sup> P. Vassiliadis, "Prolegomena to a Discussion on the Relationship Between Mark and the Q-Document," *Deltion Biblikon Meleton* 3 (1975), 45.

<sup>26</sup> The question which arises is whether these meals can be reduced only to the last one, commonly called the "Last Supper," before his crucifixion. Paul, our earliest source, seems to anchor the eucharistic tradition he received in the historical situation of the last meal of Jesus with his disciples. Thus, he claims continuity between the meals celebrated by the community with the meal celebrated by Jesus in the night in which he was handed over. However, the possibility that this connection was the result of his *theologia crucis* cannot be excluded.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. my "The Biblical Foundation of the Eucharistic Ecclesiology" (in Greek), in *Lex Orandi. Studies of Liturgical Theology*, EKO 9 (Thessaloniki, 1994), 29ff.

<sup>28</sup> J. Taylor, "La fraction du pain en Luc-Actes," in *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, (ed. J. Verheyden; Leuven, 1999), 281-295; cf. also E. Nodet and J. Taylor, *The Origins of Christianity*, 88-123.

<sup>29</sup> Pseudo-Dionysios Areopagite, *Epistle X*, 1117A and 1120A (208:4-5 and 209:12).

<sup>30</sup> E. Lohse, *Grundrisse der neutestamentlichen Theologie*, 1974 (all references here are from the Greek translation 1980, 184ff). cf. however the interesting essay of C. K. Barrett, "Christocentric or Theocentric? Observations on the Theological Method of the Fourth Gospel," *Essays on John* (1982), 1-18.

<sup>31</sup> This does not mean that there are no pneumatological hints in the earlier synoptic tradition, as J. Karavidopoulos has shown, but there the references are limited and indirect.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Robert Kysar, "John, The Gospel of," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary on CD-ROM*.

<sup>33</sup> B. Lindars has stated that the discussion on the issue "would never

have arisen if it had not been for the effect of the Reformation on Western theology" (*The Gospel of John* [1972], 261).

<sup>34</sup> cf. O. Cullmann, *Les Sacraments dans l'Evangile Johannique* (1951), incorporated in his *Early Christian Worship*, 1953. The rediscovery of the sacramental characteristics in John's Gospel has in fact a long history in modern biblical scholarship: cf. S. Smalley, "Liturgy and Sacrament in the Fourth Gospel," *EvQ* 29 (1957), 159-170; C.T. Craig, "Sacramental Interest in the Fourth Gospel," *JBL* 58 (1939), 31-41; also J. M. Creed, "Sacraments in the Fourth Gospel," *The Modern Churchman* 16 (1926), 363-372.

<sup>35</sup> Isa 66:18, 2:2, 59:21; Joel 3:1; Ezek 36:24.

<sup>36</sup> Matt 25:32; Rom 12:16; *Didache* 9:4b; *Mart. Polyc.* 22:3b; Clement of Rome, *I Cor.* 12:6.

<sup>37</sup> According to R. E. Brown, "The Eucharist and Baptism in St. John," *Proceedings of the Society of Catholic College Teachers of Sacred Doctrine* 8 (1962), 14-37, the correct understanding of Johannine mysteryology very much depends on the proper understanding of ch. 6 (and ch. 3).

<sup>38</sup> G. H. Boobyer, "The Eucharistic Interpretation of the Miracles of the Loaves in Mark's Gospel," *JTS* 3(1952), 161-171, suggested half a century ago that Mark understood the miracle symbolically, but not eucharistically.

<sup>39</sup> For a history of interpretation see X. Léon Dufour, "Le mystère du Pain de Vie (Jean VI)," *RechSciRel* 46 (1958), 481-523; C. R. Koester, "John Six and the Lord's Supper," *Lutheran Quarterly* 4 (1990), 419-437. Among the most serious proposals, cf. R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 1 (1966); G. Bornkamm, "Die eucharistische Rede im Johannes-Evangelium," *ZNW* 47 (1956), 161-169; R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 2 (1980); O. Cullmann, *Urchristentum und Gottesdienst* (1944), and its translation into English, *The Early Christian Worship*; G. H. C. MacGregor, "The Eucharist in the Fourth Gospel," *NTS* 9 (1963), 111-119; O. S. Brooks, "The Johannine Eucharist: Another Interpretation," *JBL* 82 (1963), 293-300; E. Schweizer, "Das johanneische Zeugnis vom Herrenmahl," *Neotestamentica* (1963), 371-373; J. Jeremias, "Johann 6,51c-58 - redaktionell?" *ZNW* 44 (1953), 256ff.; J. Bonsirven, "Hoc est corpus meum," *Biblica* 29 (1948), 205-219; R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 218ff; P. Borgen, *Bread from Heaven*, 1965 (cf. also his article "Unity of the Discourse in John 6," *ZNW* 50 [1959], 277-78); J. M. Perry "The Evolution of the Johannine Eucharist," *NTS* 39 (1993), 22-35.

<sup>40</sup> "The Understanding of Eucharist in St. John's Gospel," in *Atti del VI Simposio di Efeso su S. Giovanni Apostolo*, (ed. L. Padovese; Rome,

1996), 39-52.

<sup>41</sup> Note the prophet's phraseology: "and I will make a *covenant ...a new covenant*," Jer 38:31; and "I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord... and they shall be unto me a *people*" (Jer 24:7).

<sup>42</sup> More on this in A. Destro-M. Pesce, "Gestualità e ritualità nel Vangelo di Giovanni: la lavanda dei piedi," in *Atti del VI Simposio di Efeso su S. Giovanni Apostolo*, (ed. L. Padovese; Rome, 1996); J. D. G. Dunn, "The Washing of the Disciples' Feet in John 13,1-20," *ZNW* 61 (1970), 247-252; D. Tripp, "Meaning of Foot-Washing: John 13 and Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 840," *ET* 103 9 (1992), 237-239.

<sup>43</sup> E. Kasselouri, "The Narratives of Peter's Confession (Mt 16:13-20 par.) and of the Anointing of Jesus (Mt 26:6-13 par.). Parallel Messianic Narratives?" *Deltio Biblikon Meleton* 13 (1994), 27-33. Also, in "The Gospel of Matthew," in *Proceedings of the VII Conference of Orthodox Biblical Scholars* (in Greek) (Thessaloniki, 1996), 169-175.

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## **Clean and Unclean in the New Testament: Implications for Contemporary Liturgical Practices**

DEMETRIOS C. PASSAKOS

One of the constitutive elements of the worldview that every culture brings forth is the distinction between sacred and profane and consequently between clean and unclean. Previous generations of scholars used to believe that distinctions of this sort were only typical of primitive cultures and their respective religious expressions. Studies in the last decades though, have convincingly demonstrated that modern societies create and impose on their members norms rooted in this distinction as well. Uncleanness is perceived in its essence as disorder, a threat to social harmony and decency, an element tolerable only at the margins, but preferably completely beyond the borders maintained by a society. In this perspective, “unclean” is everything that does not fit in the space, or even in the time, in which it is found, and thus belongs elsewhere. Such a location of the unclean indirectly defines the boundaries of a “cultural map.”

The distinction between clean and unclean was of keen interest to Palestinian Judaism. It defined relations between the Jews and other peoples, animals, plants, and other things. Jesus, appearing in such an environment, took a position vis-à-vis this distinction and its consequences. So did the first Christian communities as reflected in the books of the New Testament. Approaching these positions is not only historically interesting; it provides us with the appropriate preconditions for evaluating modern Christian practices resulting

from the distinction between clean and unclean.

### **Jewish Background**

Studies of modern anthropologists like Mary Douglas and Edmond Leach have shown that the purity laws a society imposes on its members have a direct relation with the external pressures that this society receives as a whole. Douglas, a British anthropologist, particularly in her study *Purity and Danger*, relied on the principle that the human body is often used as a symbol of the wider society, which therefore acquires form, external boundaries, margins and internal structure.<sup>1</sup> She suggests that the rituals that express concern about the body's orifices reflect the anxiety to maintain the political and cultural unity of a minority group. This is what happened, according to Douglas, in the case of Israel: "The Israelites were always in their history a hard-pressed minority. In their beliefs all the bodily issues were polluted: blood, pus, excreta, semen, etc. The threatened boundaries of their politic body would be well mirrored in their care for the integrity, unity and purity of the physical body... The anxiety about bodily margins expresses danger to group survival."<sup>2</sup> The use and importance of this observation is also seen in a study by Leach, who utilized the structuralism of Claude Levi-Strauss for an analysis of the Old Testament. Leach claimed that the law of endogamy in parallel to the political practice of mixed marriages, and demonstrated that the sociopolitical problems Israel faced, such as being surrounded by often hostile nations, are reflected in the Jewish legislation about purity.<sup>3</sup> This legislation is constituted by the Pentateuch's "purity laws" (Lev 11-15), the "law of holiness" (Lev 17-26), and code of laws (Deut 14:1-21), which, among other factors, determined the development of Jewish sectarianism during the Greco-Roman times.

Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14:1-21, therefore, draw a

distinction between clean and unclean animals. Furthermore, sections of Leviticus concern the purification of women after childbirth (ch. 12); laws concerning leprosy and plague (ch. 13); the cleaning and purification of those afflicted with disease (ch. 14); and bodily discharges (running issue, menstruation, bloodshed) (ch. 15). Leviticus 17 describes the tabernacle or temple as the only clean places for sacrifices, and sets the prohibition against eating meat with blood. Leviticus 18 names the unclean sexual relations; and chapter 19 contains several laws of holiness and justice (Sabbath, idols, relations with one another). Leviticus 20 defines the penalties concerning serious sins (homicide, magic, unclean sexual relations) and chapter 21 outlines the duties of the priest and the high priest; chapter 22 regards the holiness of the offerings and how holiness could be achieved. Leviticus 23 recounts the proper way to celebrate the festivals and chapter 24 tells about the care for the lamp, the blasphemy against God and the law of retribution. In Lev 25 one can find information about the sabbatical and the jubilee year, the institution of slavery and the relation of Israelites to it. This unit ends in chapter 26, which contains blessings for obedience to the Law and curses for its violation.

A careful analysis of the above-mentioned laws leads to easy initial conclusions: a) The “clean-unclean” Jewish framework includes animals, fish, birds and plants (and therefore food), places and times, and human beings, as we will see later; b) dirt is specifically connected with death (cf. Num 19), with genital excretion, with leprosy, with human feces (cf. Deut 23:12-24; Ezek 4:12-14) and primarily with blood, since it is perceived as the carrier of life (Lev 17:11). c) If one tries to find coherence in all these ritual norms, the only possible explanation is that these laws intensified the separation of Israelites from the neighboring Gentile peoples, and that they helped them to maintain faith in God, who assured them that in doing so “I will set my tabernacle

among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people” (Lev 26:11-12 KJV). Anyway, we have to mention here that the later great writers, the prophets, radically transferred the ritual customs to the realm of interpersonal responsibility (cf. e.g. Isa 1:10-17).<sup>4</sup>

The mutual dependence between these ritual laws and Jewish sectarianism is also present in the ways the various Jewish groups tried to maintain their particular identity, which distinguished them not only from Gentiles, but from other Jews too. Thus, for example, the Pharisees – the name itself testifies to their qualitative separation from the others – were organized in religious groups (*haburoth*) and set up boundaries between themselves and outsiders, who were by definition a source of ritual defilement. In addition, they paid the tithe to the priests and the Levites, and they ate their food in a framework of ritual cleanness, like the priests. This concern for ritual cleanness had also led the monks of Qumran into isolation, where, with almost daily ritual baths and sacred meals, they proclaimed their cleanness and their revulsion towards those outside the community. The Zealots preferred to die rather than be defiled by eating prohibited food according to the Jewish laws of purity (cf. 1-2 Macc).

From this perspective, food in particular became the means by which members defined what was consistent with and what was contrary to the Law. Food defined the relationship of Jews with God, and among themselves. In this way it could represent blessing or curse, acceptance or rejection or doubt, it could be identified with God’s word, it could therefore be a constitutive element of the covenant, of sectarianism, even of apostasy.<sup>5</sup>

We must particularly approach the case of common meals within the context of Jewish views about the Gentiles. Jewish society was stratified into categories of people according to their lineage origins and their possible relation

with the Temple. Following early rabbinical traditions, reflecting the situation in the times of Jesus, one could find in Palestine, according to the Jewish viewpoint, seven categories of people<sup>6</sup>: (a) Priests; (b) Levites; (c) Full-blooded Israelites; (d) Illegal children of priests, proselytes or Gentile converts to Judaism and proselyte freedmen; (e) Those born of incestuous or adulterous unions, foundlings and eunuchs made so by men; (f) Eunuchs born that way, those deformed sexually and the hermaphrodites; (g) and Gentiles, meaning the non-Jews. In accordance with this scale was the degree of purity of each group.<sup>7</sup> The Gentiles therefore belonged at the bottom, and were treated as abomination, or at the very least unclean; one could say they were entirely off the purity scale. Any contact with their bodies, clothes, houses, even cooking vessels was avoided as polluting. Keep in mind here that even God-fearers, were still regarded as Gentiles.<sup>8</sup> They were not allowed to enter the Temple, except in the Gentiles' precinct, to marry with, eat with, or relate with members of the Jewish community. The only way for a Gentile to be transferred to a higher place in the purity scale was to become a proselyte; that is, to be circumcised. Even then he was not a full Israelite, but he was placed in a lower place in the purity scale.

We have ample historical evidence about the general Jewish prohibition for common meals with the Gentiles. This information can be considered reliable since it contains, besides the Jewish references, views or responses of classical writers towards Jews and Judaism such as from Hecataeus of Abdera in his work "Aegyptiaca," Apollonius Molon in his work "Against the Jews," Philostratus in his work "Life of Apollonius of Tyana," Pompeius Trogus, and Tacitus. Evidence from these writers and many Jewish references from the relevant era, such as 2 Maccabees 7:1ff, Daniel 1:3-17, Judith 12:1-19, Esther 4:17, Tobit 1:11, the *Letter of Aristeas*, the Book of Jubilees, the story of Joseph

and Asenath, and many rabbinical passages,<sup>9</sup> assure us that from the fourth century B.C. to the second century A.D. and afterwards, Jews tried to keep away from Gentiles, in order to maintain the community's boundaries, as defined by the Law. As P.F. Esler has remarked

Although Jews were happy to mix with Gentiles in synagogues or possibly even in market-places or streets, eating with them was a different matter. Eating was an occasion fraught with the possibility of breaching the purity code, one of the most crucial aspects of the Mosaic Law for the maintenance of the separate identity of the Jewish ethnos. The antipathy of Jews towards table-fellowship with Gentiles, in the full sense of sitting around a table with them and sharing the same food, wine and vessels, was an intrinsic feature of Jewish life centuries before and after our period.<sup>10</sup>

But we have to admit that the very existence of proselytes is the proof of a historical dilemma for the Jewish nation. This indicates a continuity, among at least some Jews, of the receptive spirit of early Israel during the pre-captivity period, as one can see in the books of Ruth and Jonah, and in parts of Isaiah and Jeremiah. This was of course the case for all Jews. On the one hand the dynamic sociopolitical tactics of the first Hasmonean Kings, the missionary concern of the diaspora Jews, and the interest of some Gentiles in the nation of philosophers, as many thought Jews were, had began a process that could transform Judaism into an "ecumenical" religion. But on the other hand, the victories and the dominance of the Maccabees were leading at the same time to a more intense emphasis on the Law and, accordingly, to uncritical nationalism.<sup>11</sup> Thus, polarizing situations were created. As a result the Jewish nation did not ever overcome, in a fruitful way, the dilemma between nationalism and missionary interest. The critical stance of early Christianity towards the Law, and particularly towards purity laws, gener-

ated the necessary dynamics for approaching the Gentiles and incorporating them into the saving community. But even here, as we will see below, overcoming that dilemma was not achieved easily, nor did it satisfy all Christian movements of the early period.

### **Early Christianity**

Early Christianity arose and developed within the framework of Israel and there are sound reasons for the allegation that, at least in its Palestinian version, it could be included in the many renewal Jewish sects of the first century. But to what degree were the Jewish traditions appropriated in the development of the Christian community? Its stance concerning purity laws and particularly common meals may provide us with useful indications about whether there was continuity or discontinuity between early Christianity and its Jewish environment and to what degree.

Jesus' activity showed that he generally accepted the purity law of Israel. But often his healings are directed towards persons considered unclean by the Law. Some of them were excluded from social relations with the rest of the Jews, for example the lepers (Mark 1:40-45; Matt 8:1-4; cf. Luke 17:11-19) and the woman with hemorrhage (Mark 5:25-34; Mat 9:20-22; Luke 8:43-48), while others were excluded from the Temple because of physical deficiency, like the demoniacs, the paralytics, the lame, and the blind. It is worth noting that many of Jesus' healings take place on the sacred day of Sabbath: plucking a grain on Sabbath and the healing of the man with the withered hand (Matt 12:1-14; Mark 2:23-3:6; Luke 6:1-11); the healing of the demoniac in Capernaum's synagogue (Luke 4:31-37; Mark 1:21-28); the healing of the crippled woman (Luke 13:10-17); the healing of the man with dropsy (Luke 14:1-6); the healing of the paralytic at Bethesda (John 5:1-18); discussion concerning

healing on Sabbath at the festival of the Booths (John 7:10-24); and the healing of a man born blind (John 9:1-34). As we understand it, the meaning of such healings was not a general contestation of the usefulness of the purity laws by Jesus. What he was rather questioning was the social usefulness of these laws. Their aim was not to shut out as many as possible from approaching God, but rather to facilitate their access to God. This is what is implied in the words of Christ, "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27 NIV; both Matthew and Luke interestingly omit it).

Thus in Galilee Christ heals a leper, a tradition narrated with almost the same words by all synoptic Evangelists (Matt 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16). Upon the request of the leper himself, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man and said, "Be clean!" (Matt 8:3). Purity laws demanded that since a leper was unclean "his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, 'unclean, unclean.' All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be" (Lev 13:45-46). He should not then come in contact with any person and if anyone touched him, he would become unclean too. While, then, Jesus transcends the Law by touching the leper, afterwards he advises him to follow the provision of the law concerning the verification of his cleansing: "Go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them" (Matt 8:4). What Jesus advises in this particular case is the observance of the rule of legal cleanness, but the subsequent verses are very interesting about the consequences of his overall stance. "As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere" (Mark 1:45; Luke 5:16 softens the meaning of the verse: "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places



and prayed,” and Matthew omits the verse altogether.).

In the case of the healing of the ten lepers, a tradition from Luke’s particular material (17:11-19), the picture seems to fully comply with the demands of the law: the lepers “stood at a distance” (17:12), there was not any contact with Christ, and they were advised, too, to go and show themselves to the priests. As they went, they were cleansed.

The incident of the healing of the woman with hemorrhage (Matt 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48) is probably the single instance where, even indirectly, the stance of Christ towards the Jewish perception of blood is depicted (Lev 15:25-30). While the law prohibited any touch with that woman, since it would cause uncleanness, Christ finally rewarded her for her boldness to touch his clothes and heals her saying that it was her faith that saved her.

Purity laws, then, though remaining important, are not of first priority.<sup>12</sup> Whereas for Jews the important element was how they would be able to approach God, the early Christians emphasized how God approached Israel. Moreover, and this was determinant, while for Jews this approach was achieved “in the Law,” for Christians it was done “in Christ.”<sup>13</sup> The fundamental problem for early Christianity arises in relation with the question, “How does one achieve being in Christ?” Should one first pass through “being in the Law,” or is it useless to place any presupposition? For the Jerusalemite community what was needed was a realistic compromise that would secure the preservation of Christianity within the Jewish framework, but that, at the same time, would not shut out Gentiles from the possibility of participation in the redeeming community. This realistic compromise was reached with the outcome of the Apostolic Council. According to it, as we read in Acts 15:28-29, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols (cf. Lev 17:8-9), from blood (cf. Lev 17:10-

12), from the meat of strangled animals (cf. Lev 17:13-16), and from sexual immorality (cf. Lev 18:1-23). You will do well to avoid these things.”

But for others, like Paul, who seems to ignore even the existence of any apostolic decree, “Christian purity laws” do not derive from any legal perception, even a biblical one, but rather from the life of the members of the community in Christ itself. It is worth noting that Paul and his communities did not appropriate anything from those factors considered holy and sacred (Temple, organization of the people, sacrifices, priesthood, sacred seasons and times). Additionally, Paul’s firm position against any attempt to relativize the new “in Christ” situation with the acceptance of provisions of the old Law, remained strongly impressed in the memory of Christians. This was the reason that he rebuked the Galatians in such an acute way:

But now that you know God - or rather are known by God - how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear of you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you (Gal 4:9-10).

For the same reason he warns the Colossians:

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration, or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ ... Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: ‘Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!’ These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in re-

straining sensual indulgence (Col 2:16-17, 20-23).

For Paul, nothing is in itself unclean (Rom 14:14). But when a believer accepts such scruples, then his position must be taken into account and must be respected (cf. 1 Cor 8:7-13; Rom 14:15, 21), because the first care of every believer should be the building up of the Church and the prevention of every situation that destroys God's work (Rom 14:19-20).

While the question of the admission of the Gentiles into the Christian community seems to have been resolved without causing serious reactions, the issue created practical problems, especially with regard to the common meals of Jewish and Gentile Christians. It is worth exploring the views Christian communities had on the issue, as these are described in the Gospels and in the incident outlined in Paul's Letter to the Galatians.

The passage of Mark 7:1-30, alluding to common meals, is quite revealing, as it offers a combination of the dismissal of Levitical food laws (vv. 1-23) with the incident where Christ comes in direct contact with Gentiles and the healing of the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman. The issue concerning clean or unclean food starts with a virtually verbatim logion of Christ: "Nothing outside a man can make him unclean by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him unclean" (v. 15). The interpretation asked by the disciples is given in v. 19: "For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods 'clean')." Here, especially in the second part of the verse, the break through the Levitical purity law is obvious. Mark does not overlook that the issue of the cleanness of food is a real one, but he redefines cleanness in such a way, that it has no longer something to do with ritual themes or with food.<sup>14</sup> This is verified from the rest of the account, where, as it seems, Christ puts into practice what he taught previously (vv. 1-23).

In verse 24 Christ appears to approach the area of Tyre and Sidon, an area populated by Gentiles. He enters into an obviously Gentile house. The text adds nothing more, but we may suppose that he accepts the owner's hospitality, perhaps even sits with them at table. Merely by the fact that he comes in contact with Gentiles, Jesus demonstrates his dismissal of the Jewish purity laws. In this house the Syrophenician woman begs him to heal her ill daughter. The dialogue provides us with clear indications about common meals. In verse 28, Jews and Gentiles are seen eating from the same bread at the same table. It seems likely, then, that the issue of common meals was a real problem for Mark's community. Despite the reactions of some members in this community, the example of that woman is utilized as a prototype of the legally unclean Gentiles, who could, however, with their own faith have their place at the common Eucharistic tables of the community.<sup>15</sup>

Very important conclusions can be inferred by the way Matthew (15:1-28) utilized this Markan tradition. First, he omits verse Mark 7:19b "καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα" (purifying all food), and adds verse 15:20b: "τὸ δὲ ἀνίπτους χερσὶν φαγεῖν οὐ κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον" ("but eating with unwashed hands does not make him unclean"). With these two changes Matthew presents Christ as not dismissing the Law, and transfers the center of the discussion for cleanness of food to cleanness of hands during the meal. Such a modification certainly has its consequences in the rest of the account. Jesus and his disciples do not enter a Gentile house (15:21) and the meeting with the woman occurs in the street (15:22-23). Moreover, from the dialogue of Christ with the woman, especially in addition to verse 24 and the variant in comparison with Mark 7:27, it seems that the picture of common meals between "children" and "dogs" is diminished. The picture created by Matthew is that during the writing of the Gospel the community was still attached

to Judaism.<sup>16</sup> The reality of common Eucharistic tables is, for Matthew, a vision of the future.<sup>17</sup>

The issue of common meals between Jews and Gentiles has a prominent place in Luke's history of the beginnings of Christianity and in the life of his community. Incidents like the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10:1-11, 18), the Apostolic Council (Acts 15), the hospitality Paul receives from Gentiles (Acts 16:14-15, 25-34, 18:7-11), and possibly even the incident of the meal (Acts 27:33-38), show that the issue of common meals created contestations in the early Church, which evidently affected the community of Luke. Philip Francis Esler, in his magnificent work, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lukan Theology*, having first constructed in many respects a successful critical presentation of Luke's view of the above mentioned incidents, reaches the conclusion that the problem of common meals, which seemed to have been solved at the early stage of the expansion of Christianity in the Jewish diaspora, was, by the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth decade of the first century, again a problem for Jewish Christians. This can be seen in the incident of Antioch<sup>18</sup> and in Matthew's Gospel. The result was the compromising solution of the Apostolic Council, which seems to have been valid for the communities of Antioch, Syria and Cilicia only, while in Jerusalem, Jewish Christians never got used to the idea of common meals. In Luke's community on the other hand, the Paul's views about common meals, as without any legal obligations on the part of the Gentiles, prevailed.<sup>19</sup> In the same line, and maybe even more intensely, was the community of John. The incident of the Samaritan woman (4:4-26), of Nicodemus (3:1-15), of the adulterous woman (7:53-8:11), and the harsh Eucharistic words of Christ (6:51ff.), prove that the distinctions imposed by the Jewish purity laws were no longer valid for John's community.<sup>20</sup>

The subsequent history of Christianity justifies the posi-

tion for common meals and later ecclesiastical writers turn against every attempt from Judaizers to relativize the gospel of Christ. Ignatius' letters to the Philadelphians and the Magnesians, show that even in the beginning of the next century, there were Judaizers who disrupted the unity of the Church and questioned unity in the Eucharist.<sup>21</sup> Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* confirms the existence of Judaizers in the Church (46.1) and their efforts to obligate Gentile Christians to observe the Law and practice circumcision (47.1-2). Between the Ebionites – the extreme, heretical wing of Judaizers – there was a strong tendency to stress the superiority and the importance of Peter, in combination with the expression of fierce hostility towards Paul.<sup>22</sup> But for the Church of the first centuries what prevailed was the spiritual view for purity<sup>23</sup> – “to the pure all things are pure” (Titus 1:15) – and since Christ sanctified the church “cleansing her by the washing with water through the word” (Eph 5:26), purity rituals ceased to be valid any longer. But if there were any members within the Church who, because of their weak faith, still accepted the validity of these laws, this position was to be treated with condescension for the sake of the unity of the Church.

### Conclusion

The above brief analysis tempts the Orthodox scholar to evaluate contemporary Christian practices concerning ritual cleanness through the prism of early Christian practice. It seems that in our time special attention is given to conceptions about blood, which are related to the meaning of cleanness and dirt. Thus, a woman who has her menstrual period is not allowed to partake in Holy Communion. In some even severer versions, she is even prohibited to enter the Church or venerate the icons. The birth mother is considered to be unclean before she receives the special blessing on the for-

tieth day – not only the mother herself, but also everyone who has touched her! Possibly the same reason lies behind the practice of taking the child into the altar only if it is a boy. Besides the historical tradition against the ordination of women (conceived in a paradoxical way in any case), a woman nevertheless does not qualify for the priesthood mainly because of these views concerning blood.

Despite the fact that some of the above practices are mentioned in the canons of the Church, it is quite evident that they derive from Jewish religiosity, restoring a legalism that was overcome during early Christian history. In any event (either as seated in social conceptions concerning cleanness or as religious commands for purity before God), it seems that they are at least a retrogression to pre-Pauline practices, which the Apostle Paul himself rebukes in an intense way:

Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence (Col. 2:23).

Realizing this fact, the Church of Greece is moving with careful steps towards a reformulation of the blessing for the fortieth day after birth, which attests to the fact that such blessings create problems in their present text. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning the propositions contributed by women's organizations of the Church in conferences concerning the place of women in the Orthodox Church. But here lurks the danger of replacing legalism with a counter, which will be another legalism. This usually happens when such changes occur under the pressure of factors outside of the Church (the feminist movement, for example), where the motivations are purely "secular" and there is not even a hint of the ecclesiastical criteria.

A proposition that seems to be in accordance with the data offered in this article is to leave these issues to the freedom

of conscience of each believer, without the bias of any "law." For example, it is absurd to exclude a woman in her menstrual period from full participation in the life of the Church, but it would be equally absurd to impose the opposite, when and if a woman for psychological, or personal reasons knowingly chooses abstention. In such a way, a twofold profit will be gained: the anti-legalistic character of the Church will be manifested, while there will not be any offense to the conscience of Christians for whom purity laws seem to be still valid. What matters essentially is the unity and the building up of the Church as the Body of Christ.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1980); see especially ch. 7, "External Boundaries."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>3</sup> E. Leach, *Genesis as Myth and Other Essays* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969); see especially the chapter entitled "The Legitimacy of Solomon," 25-83.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. W. Zimmerli, *Επίτομη Θεολογία της Παλαιάς Διαθήκης*, 3rd ed., Greek translation of *Grundriss der alten testamentlichen Theologie* (Athens: Artos Zōēs, 1981), 157-178.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the excellent analysis of G. Feeley-Harnik, in his book *The Lord's Table: Eucharist and Passover in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 71-106.

<sup>6</sup> Information for this is derived from J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions During the New Testament Period*, trans. F. H. and C. H. Cave (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 271 ff.

<sup>7</sup> B. J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 134.

<sup>8</sup> J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 320.

<sup>9</sup> For an analytical presentation of this, see, P. F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 76-86.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>11</sup> G. Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table*, 47.



<sup>12</sup> B. J. Malina, *The New Testament World*, 143-146.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. L. W. Countryman, *Dirt, Greed and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and their Implications for Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 103-104. B. J. Malina, *The New Testament World*, 150.

<sup>14</sup> H. C. Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983), 148-149.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. P. F. Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 91. H. C. Kee, *Community of the New Age*, 92, 97.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. D. C. Passakos, "Matthew's Community: Theological Data in the Light of Sociology," in *Theology and Society in Dialogue: New Hermeneutical Approaches in the New Testament*, *Bibliotheca Biblica* 18 (Thessaloniki: Pournaras, 2001), 83-100.

<sup>17</sup> J.C. Fenton, *Saint Matthew*, in *The Pelican New Testament Commentaries* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963), 254-256.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. D. C. Passakos, "'He used to eat with the Gentiles (Gal 2:12)': Food Symbolism in Judaism and in Early Christian Tradition. The Contribution of Cultural Anthropology," in *Theology and Society in Dialogue: New Hermeneutical Approaches in the New Testament*, *Bibliotheca Biblica* 18 (Thessaloniki: Pournaras, 2001), 101-130.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. P. F. Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 105-109.

<sup>20</sup> L. W. Countryman, *Dirt, Greed and Sex*, 92-94. Cf. D. Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988).

<sup>21</sup> *Library of the Greek Fathers (BEP)* 2, Letter of Ignatius to the Philadelphians, 308.2; 309.29ff. Letter of Ignatius to the Magnesians, 295.14ff; 296.10ff.

<sup>22</sup> For the theology of Jewish Christianity and particularly of the Ebionites, cf. J. Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, trans. J. A. Baker (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Ἀγνός, in *Vocabulaire de Théologie Biblique*, (trans. by S. Agourides, et al.; Athens: Artos Zōēs, 1980), 24-28.

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## MUSIC IN THE PARISH: "THE SINGING PARISH"

STEVEN KARIDOYANES

*Introduction*

When designing this two-hour discussion and workshop on the broad topic of "Music in the Parish," I felt it was necessary to focus on one goal. That goal was to leave every participant with ideas for available action-steps to better support and facilitate their parish's music ministry. Areas of discussion would include, but were not limited to, improving their congregational singing, their choir, or their Sunday school music curriculum. Achieving this goal depended on the interaction, the participation and the group dynamic of the session attendees.

Our gathering included parish council members, church musicians and interested lay-people from around the country, as well as several seminarians and one young priest. Resource material was both displayed and distributed. To tailor the ultimate content of our discussion to the specific needs of the parishes represented, I believed, a vital exchange of ideas, concerns, perspectives and passions was necessary. The following article is a summation of this session.

*Misconceptions versus the current reality of music in the parish*

A lively and passionate discussion ensued during this conference session. Each participant was invited to share his or her perspective on music in the parish. What became clear during this discussion is that there is a tremendous chasm between what is the current reality of the music ministry in the parishes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in America and an uninformed perception of this music ministry.

Several in attendance revealed both their point of view and personal disdain for what they perceived to be the current state of music in the parishes. Comments made reflected a lack of exposure to the rich musical legacy of the parishes and the spirit in which these music ministries are offered.

Here is a partial list of concerns shared by participants, which have been paraphrased. These concerns are followed with a point-by-point response:

*Misconception 1:*

*The reason there is so much influence of Western-styled and harmonized music in the Greek Orthodox Church of America is because, around 1900, our immigrant forefathers experienced cultural pressures to fit in. The incorporation of Catholic and Protestant musical idioms in our service music was a direct response to their perceived need to "Americanize" Greek Orthodox worship in this country.*

The Athenian psalti, John Theophrastos Sakellarides (c.1853-1938), published his Byzantine notation transcriptions of the Divine Liturgy and other hymns in Greece early in the twentieth century. Not only did Sakellarides publish these melodies, he published them harmonized in what we would consider "Western" harmony. The Sakellarides publications became the primary source material for how worship music was to be rendered in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America for nearly a century. Most notably, the hymnal by George Anastasiou, first published in this country in the mid-1940s, became the widely distributed, widely available liturgical source, strongly influenced by the Sakellarides Byzantine notation transcriptions.

*Misconception 2:*

*Many Byzantine melodies currently in use and serving as the basis of our church music were transcribed incorrectly. Therefore, they must be changed. To knowingly continue using these incorrect melodies amounts to being "un-Orthodox" and shows a questionable sincerity as to why church musicians participate in the Divine Liturgy.*

There is no argument Byzantine melodies have been transcribed incorrectly. But these melodies, flaws and all, have become the aural fabric of the Orthodox Church in this country for nearly a century. This is the history of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in America. To deny this fact and couple it with the judgment of insincerity is harmful. This sentiment will alienate a large percentage of a congregation who associate the hymns they have learned with their devotion to the Church.

*Misconception 3:*

*Although Russian in its origin, the music of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) is truer to the Byzantine tradition, both in terms of chromatic use and emphasis of melody over harmony, than the current musical practice of Greek Orthodox parishes in America. This includes the four-part harmonizations currently in use by the Greek Orthodox parishes in this country.*

The OCA/Slavonic melodies and pitch (chromatic) choices are, in actuality, very different from Byzantine chant. The Slavonic tradition evolved

into a harmonic tradition, not, exclusively, a melodic one. Regarding four-part harmonization, consider this brief overview. First, the tradition of Slavonic chant evolved first from a single melody, then to two voices harmonized in parallel, finally with the addition of a pedal tone (an *ison*). This made the music a three-part texture. To then add (compose) another, fourth, vocal part wasn't too far a stretch. Second, the Byzantine chanting tradition currently taught also evolved from a harmonized melody and an *ison*. It isn't a tradition as handed down through the ages but rather an eighteenth-century practice. Third, the majority of the music as presented in the Greek Orthodox Church of America evolved from the melodies as transcribed by Sakellarides, harmonized with parallel vocal parts with an added *ison*. Formal harmonizations were subsequently composed based on Sakellarides' efforts.

From this, the following point must be made clear: Music for worship *evolves* due to matters of culture and other influences.

#### *Misconception 4:*

*Those responsible for making musical decisions choose to do things incorrectly. All people involved should care enough to read Byzantine notation and to "do it right," for our faith lies in our Byzantine music.*

The current reality of Greek Orthodox parishes in America includes people who do not read Greek, nor Byzantine notation, nor "Western" musical notation. They sincerely do the best they can with the limitations they possess. These individuals believe singing to the glory of God is its own reward. In most parishes, those who sing in the choir are also active volunteers in other aspects of their church's life. This is especially true for parishes which, by choice or necessity, practice congregational singing.

#### *Communication between parish priest and music leader*

Some worshippers come to know their faith as they read the printed word and some through hearing it. The message and content of the Orthodox faith is further enhanced when the medium of its delivery, in this case the sung word, is strategically considered. Certain practical measures, properly addressed, will magnify the message.

Addressing these matters requires a clear channel of communication between the parish priest and the music leader. Whether the music leader is the choir director, the psalti or the person who leads the congregation in congregational singing, the ultimate goal is to create an environment conducive to prayer. Strategically considered choices can heighten the worship experience. Here are some considerations:

1. *The choice of music.* Regardless of whether sung by a choir, congregation, or both:

- Does the music itself cause a distraction?
- Is the music too difficult to sing?
- Does the music make congregational participation, whether audibly or inaudibly, difficult?
- Are the sung responses configured in such a way that the celebrant has difficulty finding the appropriate intoning pitch?
- Is the music written in such a way that the text is difficult to understand?
- In the case of choral music: Does the music reasonably reflect the ability and limitations of the choir?

As the entire worship service is sung, the parish priest and parish music leader must continually consider and evaluate the music selected by the parish to optimize a prayerful environment.

2. *Rehearsal.* Choirs understand the necessity of rehearsal. However, few music leaders have experienced the benefit and comfort of rehearsing the responsorial portions of a worship service with their parish priest. This type of communication can be truly enlightening. If there is a church choir to consider, the priest and music leader should first practice alone, then with the choir. It is also most beneficial to practice in the acoustical environment of the church sanctuary. An intoning pitch emanating from a pitch pipe or organ is not necessarily perceived the same way by the priest standing behind an icon screen in the sanctuary. Distance and volume of space *will* change how a pitch is heard. This phenomenon is *real* and its negative affect must not be underestimated.

3. *Agreeing on the pitch.* In an ecclesiastical tradition where everything is sung, agreeing on which intoning pitch serves the worship best is vitally important. This need not be a sensitive issue. In most every case, extremes need to be avoided. And throughout a worship service, the agreed-upon intoning pitch needs to be reconfirmed, adjusted, or changed altogether, depending on the needs of the service.

Sounding an agreed-upon, yet unobtrusive, intoning pitch by pitch pipe, organ or vocalized hum ensures a less distracting and more beautifully flowing worship service. Here are some suggested places within a Divine Liturgy where establishing the best possible intoning pitch might be very helpful:

- Before "Blessed is the kingdom..." at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy;
- Before "Let us pray to the Lord/Lord, have mercy" which precedes the *Trisagion Hymn*;

- Immediately following the *Cherubic Hymn*;
- Immediately following the *Creed*;
- Immediately following the *Megalináron*;

These are only suggestions. Through respectful communication the parish priest and music leader can make decisions which best serve the worship for their community.

### *The use of English*

The use of English in a parish is an individual matter. But, just as great care must be given to the choice of music, the same care must be given in considering English settings of Orthodox worship music.

- Is the English translation doctrinally correct?
- Does the English text fall naturally on the ear?
- Does it flow easily when spoken or sung?
- Is the English set in such a way that the text is easily understood?
- In its musical setting, does the English make sense and is it grammatically correct?

This last consideration is neglected all too often. Those who are considering the Orthodox faith for themselves, or those who are non-Orthodox and experiencing Orthodox worship for the first time, will be attentive listeners. They shouldn't have to go through an unnecessary process to understand Orthodox worship – let alone be left with an unflattering impression.

### *The singing parish: What does this mean?*

Although the churches of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America are unified in faith, those who worship in these Orthodox parishes do not share the same aural experiences. How worship services are musically rendered varies greatly throughout the country. When rendered honestly and with the appropriate degree of humility, all variations are proper. Music, however, can benefit a parish outside the formal context of a Divine Liturgy. "The Singing Parish" refers to an integrated church experience, both within the setting of a worship service and without.

How church communities ultimately come to offer the hymns and responses of a worship service may be a matter of choice, resource, or both. There are parishes that wish they had a choir and those that choose not to have one. There are choirs led by music professionals and choirs led by caring volunteers who answered a call to fulfill a parish need. Hymns and responses in some parishes are sung by a psalti, either novice or experienced, or by the congregation, either led by someone or left on their own. There are situations where the musical experience encompasses a combination of the variables listed above. The choice and percentage of which

language is sung is also a major variable. Regardless of the variables, the act of singing is inextricably linked to Orthodox worship.

Outside the confines of the worship service, however, singing is still a vital way of remaining connected to the Orthodox faith. The "sound of Orthodoxy" can be reinforced whenever the faithful gather. Religious music education needn't be limited to the activities of a Youth or Junior Choir. Much can be revealed to a Sunday school class or an adult education program by the study and singing of appropriately chosen Orthodox hymns. Retreats, camps and other spiritual or social gatherings are brought into focus in a meaningful way when the communal singing of hymns is included.

### *The resource material*

Materials for display and distribution during this conference session were made available by the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians, the musical ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Their efforts include:

- Liturgical Music Education: teaching young people the beauty of the Holy Orthodox Church through her hymns;
- Supporting Church music programs: as a service organization for choir directors, choir members, organists and psalti;
- Perpetuating the knowledge, use and appreciation of Byzantine chant.

For a more detailed introduction into the activities of this musical ministry, including a listing of available publications and resource material, contact the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians directly. Their Internet website may be accessed through the website of the Archdiocese ([www.goarch.org/goa/institutions/musicians](http://www.goarch.org/goa/institutions/musicians)). In closer proximity to each parish, almost every diocese in the country oversees a regional choir federation. These regional organizations also provide a wealth of information and support to your parish.

### *Conclusion*

The Orthodox parish is a singing parish. To encourage singing in all aspects of parish life is to further nurture a parishioner's relationship with the Orthodox Church. It is necessary, however, for all the caretakers of the Greek Orthodox Church in America, both clergy and laypeople, to educate themselves in regards to a parish's music ministry. Greater vigilance is needed to evaluate how the facts, as well as *the truth*, are taught. When misconceptions are fostered because of a drought of information and understanding, a good shepherd is needed who, in a loving way, enlightens and edifies those who search for the current reality of music in the parish.



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***“Paramythetikos Christos”:***  
**St. John Chrysostom Interprets John 13-17**

GEORGE PARSENIOS

Novel approaches in New Testament studies are often inspired, or at least supported, by the publication of previously unknown or long-ignored comparative literature.<sup>1</sup> In the twentieth century, Johannine scholars first postulated that the unique imagery of the Gospel of John represented a form of “Gnostic” Mandaism, following the extensive publication of the Mandaean literature in the 1920s, only later to decide that the Fourth Evangelist had more in common with the Essenes, following the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the 1940s.<sup>2</sup>

Although my focus in the present paper is the interpretation of the Gospel of John, it will serve my argument to note here the way in which Pauline studies have advanced on a similar pattern. In the latter half of the 19th century, the writings of the moral philosophers from the Hellenistic era and early Empire were published anew in Germany. The New Testament critic Johannes Weiss found these newly available works so compelling for biblical research that he insisted that New Testament scholars should approach the Bible with the moral philosophers, and in particular the Stoics, at their elbows.<sup>3</sup> Contemporary critics continue to follow this advice, particularly in studying the Apostle Paul. Inasmuch as moral philosophers like Seneca and Plutarch urge people through rhetorically sophisticated letters and treatises to take

up the philosophical life, they illuminate the pastoral work of St. Paul, who urges people through rhetorically sophisticated letters to take up the Christian life.

This area of inquiry has recently been extended to include yet another forgotten body of writings. Interpreters who read St. Paul with the moral philosophers at one elbow have recently made room at their other elbow for a set of ancient texts that modern New Testament scholars have studiously avoided: the writings of the Church Fathers, especially St. John Chrysostom, and the work of other early Christian interpreters like Origen. These ancient interpreters regularly identify passages in which New Testament authors employ the motifs and techniques of moral philosophers, and so provide ancient support for modern theories. Contemporary interpreters regularly defend their comparison of St. Paul's pastoral work to the moral exhortation of Seneca, Plutarch and others with phrases such as: "John Chrysostom was aware that Paul was referring to this..."<sup>4</sup>

I begin this way because I will proceed in a similar manner, utilizing John Chrysostom's commentary on the Johannine Farewell Discourses in order to make the case that at least some aspects of these discourses are clarified in comparison to classical literature. Most scholars see in the Farewell Discourses the intent to console. The Lord has announced that his death is imminent, and he now prepares his disciples for his departure. Questions arise, however, in explaining the consolatory quality of the discourses, and this often involves discussions of genre. A majority opinion holds that the Farewell Discourses are a clear and full example of the testament genre, a form exemplified by Moses' farewell in Deuteronomy, but existing in a host of other Old Testament, Jewish and New Testament texts.<sup>5</sup> Brown defines the testament form as follows:

The common situation is that of a great man who gathers together his followers (his children, his disciples or the peo-

ple) on the eve of his death to give them instructions that will help them after his departure.<sup>6</sup>

There are indeed manifold undertones and echoes of the testament form in particular, and of Deuteronomy in general, in the Farewell Discourses.<sup>7</sup> But the testament is unable to explain fully the consolatory quality of the discourses. John Ashton may be overstating the case when he says that the testament is not much concerned with consolation, but the testaments do not contain anything like the elaborate efforts at consolation that appear in the Farewell Discourses.<sup>8</sup> Better comparative material is needed to illuminate the consolatory quality of the Farewell Discourses in the Gospel of John.

This need is met by the suggestion of George Kennedy in his handbook on ancient rhetoric for New Testament scholars.<sup>9</sup> Kennedy offers tentatively the opinion that the Farewell Discourses reflect the ancient rhetorical species "the consolation speech" - in Greek the *παρηγορία*, in Latin the *consolatio*. Almost as quickly as he allows for this possibility, however, Kennedy wonders, "[whether] or not a classical rhetorician would regard John 13-17 as a consolation..." and his ensuing exposition of the Farewell Discourses relies in no obvious way on the themes of consolation rhetoric.<sup>10</sup>

Kennedy seems to assume, however, that he is asking a merely rhetorical question when he wonders whether an ancient orator would agree with him. He obviously did not have John Chrysostom at his elbow! Chrysostom identifies several elaborate connections between Jesus' discourses and the expectations of classical consolation. He repeatedly defines Jesus' teaching as an expression of consolation<sup>11</sup> or he insists that in whatever Jesus says to the disciples, he consoles them.<sup>12</sup> A fuller quotation will indicate precisely how extensively Chrysostom saw consolatory tropes in these discourses:

The tyranny exercised over us by despondency is a strong

one. We need great courage if we are to persevere in resisting this emotion, and if, after deriving from it what profit we can, we are to refrain from indulging in it to excess... Therefore, as despondency was taking hold of the disciples, since they were not yet perfect, see how Christ set them right...<sup>13</sup>

At least one ancient orator, then, sees the Farewell Discourses as a consolation speech, in which Christ heals the fear and despondency of the disciples. To be sure, no discourses in the Gospel of John invite the type of close rhetorical analysis that the letters of Paul merit. The structure of Jesus' discourses is not obviously patterned on rhetorical models.<sup>14</sup> But consolation themes can still be present. In what follows, I would like to offer a survey of the most salient points by which St. John identifies themes of the consolatory treatise in the Farewell Discourses. In order to move more easily through Chrysostom's commentary, I would like to offer a brief introduction to the history and character of classical consolation literature.

Consolation could take various forms - speeches, treatises or letters<sup>15</sup> - and yet the purpose of consolation remained the same. In his treatise on epistolary types, Pseudo-Demetrius explains that consolation letters are written to people "because something bad has happened to them."<sup>16</sup> But this definition, while simple on the surface, also indicates how diverse consolation literature can be. Any number of situations might arise that require the consolation of someone overtaken by grief. Ancient lists of specific circumstances that require consolation include poverty, loss of social status, slavery, illness, blindness,<sup>17</sup> legal problems,<sup>18</sup> loss of a slave<sup>19</sup> or fraud.<sup>20</sup> Even so, the majority of surviving consolations focus on death.<sup>21</sup>

The consolation form proper is a creation of the Hellenistic era, and the lost *Περὶ πένθους πρὸς Ἰπποκλέα* of Crantor, the third century Academician, is the original and paradigm-

matic consolatory treatise, though it survives now only in fragments.<sup>22</sup> Consolation literature continued well into the patristic period and beyond, for instance in the letters of Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian.<sup>23</sup> But it is appropriate that the consolation genre arises in the philosophical climate of the Hellenistic era, when philosophers were less concerned with the elaborate metaphysical schemes of previous generations and “when the prime concern of philosophy was to equip the individual to meet the changes and chances of life... [Consolation] was the literary counterpart to the activity of such Cynic preachers as Crates who went about with his wife Hipparchia, wearing the rough cynic cloak and approaching individuals with advice.”<sup>24</sup>

This last insight is helpful for emphasizing that consolation is very much an aspect of moral formation. To console is not merely to express sympathy, but to lead a person to a more philosophical demeanor. Consolers sharply distinguish their efforts from mere sympathy.<sup>25</sup> Plutarch, in his *On Exile*, draws a distinction between lamentation and consolation as follows:

For we do not have need of those who, like tragic choruses, weep and wail with us in unwanted circumstances, but of those who will speak to us frankly and instruct us that grief and self-abasement are in every circumstance useless.<sup>26</sup>

Even so, some consolation texts contain some friendly form of sympathy, such as: “I could not help sharing in your feeling.”<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, consolation can also turn harsh, as when Seneca writes to Marullus: “You are expecting some words of comfort? Take a scolding instead! You are taking your son’s death in a weak and unworthy manner.”<sup>28</sup>

Gregory the Theologian offers a description of the genre that includes both extremes in the demeanor of the consoler, when he indicates that the purpose of consolation should be

“to sympathize on some points, exhort on others and, perhaps, to deliver a rebuke on others.”<sup>29</sup> All three of these, sympathy, exhortation, and rebuke are present in Chrysostom’s reading of the farewell discourses.

One final point needs to be made about the philosophical underpinnings of consolation. Different schools develop different approaches for combating grief. Cicero summarizes five major approaches to philosophical consolation in Book 3 of the *Tusculan Disputations*. He writes:

Some, like Cleanthes, believe that the consoler’s only task is to convince the person afflicted with grief that the alleged “evil” is not an evil at all. Others, like the Peripatetics, argue that the evil in question is not great. Others, like the Epicureans, try to avert our attention away from evil things to good things. Others, like the Cyrenaics, think that it is sufficient to show that nothing unexpected has happened. Chrysippus, however, believes that the most important thing in consoling another is to disabuse the mourner of his opinion, lest he imagine that he is fulfilling a just and obligatory duty.<sup>30</sup>

By clarifying differences among different individuals and schools, however, Cicero does not mean to suggest that one pattern of consolation is superior to all others. Rather, he displays the great variety in order to demonstrate the full panoply of possibilities. Consolation was a very eclectic practice, and members of one school would happily use the arguments of others if it aided their particular situation.<sup>31</sup> Cicero himself “threw all types of consolation into one document” in order to conquer every possible aspect of pain.<sup>32</sup> The idea is to speak to the particular circumstances at hand, with one school’s argument accomplishing what another might not. The goal of a consolation is not necessarily philosophical consistency, but the banishing of grief by whatever means necessary.

## Two Types of Grief

I would like to turn now to Chrysostom's reading of the Johannine Farewell, and will begin by glancing for a moment at the consolatory treatise that Seneca wrote to his mother when he was exiled by the Emperor Nero. Seeking to alleviate his mother's grief, he writes in regard to pain: "Now there are two possibilities. For what moves you is either the thought that you have lost some protection, or the mere longing for me is more than you can endure."<sup>33</sup>

Chrysostom sees precisely these two factors in Jesus' consolation of the disciples: *fear* about losing the Lord's protection, and *grief* at losing his companionship. Reflecting on Peter's motivation in asking Christ where he is going, Chrysostom notes that there is one thing that "Peter would dread and tremble at most of all: namely that he would be estranged from [Jesus]."<sup>34</sup> Chrysostom writes elsewhere at greater length:

...they would miss that companionship with which they had grown so familiar: His conversation, His presence in the flesh, and would receive no consolation if he were absent.<sup>35</sup>

The second theme, fear, is also present, especially later, as Jesus predicts that the disciples will be cast out of the synagogue and be hated by the world (John 15:18-16:5). Chrysostom recognizes that the disciples are terribly distraught "because they are so few in number, [and] are in consternation at the prospect of being the target of... hostility."<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere he insists that Jesus must "store up for [the disciples] ahead of time great courage for the frightful things that were to come upon them."<sup>37</sup>

Chrysostom also focuses on the fact that, although Jesus very early in his discourses tells the disciples that he is departing from them, he waits until near the end of the discourses to predict the disciples' coming persecution. Chrysostom



sees in this delay the art of the perfect consoler, who notices when the time is right for consolation, and when difficult things can best be borne. He writes:

Next, because it was difficult, and hard to bear, to be persecuted by many men, and to be reviled, and this was sufficient to depress even a lofty soul, Christ arrived at the subject of persecution only after having, for this reason, paved the way by countless references. For, after he had soothed their souls, He then approached the matter...<sup>38</sup>

This is strikingly similar to the consolation written to Apollonius ascribed to Plutarch, where the consoler recognizes that it would have done no good to approach Apollonius soon after his son's death. Apollonius would have been so distraught that he would not have profited from the advice. The text reads as follows:

...to visit you and urge you to bear your present lot as a mortal man should have been unsuitable, when you were prostrated in both body and soul by the unexpected calamity... Now since time...has intervened since the calamity, and your present condition seems to demand the aid of your friends, I have conceived it to be proper to communicate words that can give comfort, for the mitigation of grief and the termination of mournful and vain lamentations (102 A,B).

These two cases are not exactly the same. Plutarch is concerned to find the right time to care for a person who has already suffered a loss. Jesus is careful to make the anticipation of suffering as bearable as possible, by separating the prophecy of persecution from the prediction of his departure. But both comments reflect an interest in the disposition and insight of the moral guide in approaching a grieving person. Jesus is a careful consoler, seeking the best way to banish his disciples' grief.

Because Chrysostom separates neatly these two different

rhetorical concerns, the fear of persecution and the grief at losing Jesus, I will treat them separately, for the sake of organization. I will cover first the question of the disciples' distress at Jesus' departure.

### **Consolation for the Grief of Separation**

John 14:16 reads, "and I will ask the Father and he will send to you another Paraclete to dwell with you forever, the Spirit of truth." John Chrysostom sees the mere act of sending the Paraclete as the first consolatory gesture. The relevant passage was partly quoted above, but here I will quote it in full:

'And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete.' Once again the statement is one of humble tenor. It was probable that, because they did not yet rightly know Him, they would miss that companionship with which they had grown so familiar: His conversation, His presence in the flesh, and would receive no consolation if He were absent. Therefore, what did he say? 'I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete,' that is, 'another like me.'<sup>39</sup>

Because the disciples are grieving over Jesus' departure, the Paraclete comes to fill the resulting void in the hearts of his followers. The Paraclete makes up for the loss of Jesus, not of course by being another Incarnation, as Chrysostom is quick to insist, but by dwelling in their very souls.<sup>40</sup> This mechanism of substitution has a basis in the consolatory tradition. Seneca writes the following to consoler Marcia upon the death of her son:

And even the son whom you...mourn so deeply has not been utterly taken from you: you still have the two daughters he left - great burdens if you are weak, great comforts if you are brave. Do bring yourself to this - whenever you

see them, let them remind you of your son and not of your grief! Do now put these daughters of your son Metelius *in his stead*, and *fill the vacant place*, and lighten your sorrow for *one* by drawing comfort from *two*!<sup>41</sup>

Softening the loss of a loved one with a simulacrum or substitute of presence is a long-standing convention in classical literature.<sup>42</sup> According to both the Roman statesman Pliny, and the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the art of statuary and of idolatry came into being because people missed their loved ones and filled the void of longing with a simulacrum of presence.<sup>43</sup> The *Wisdom of Solomon* reads as follows:

For a father, consumed with an untimely bereavement, made an image of his child, who had been suddenly taken from him; he now honored as a god what was once a dead human being, and handed on to his dependents secret rites and initiations. Then the ungodly custom, grown strong with time, was kept as law... (14:15-16a).

So, whether by supplying either another person or some inanimate reminder of the departed, it is an act of consolation to fill an absence with a token of presence. This is how Chrysostom reads the sending of the Paraclete.

Jesus also takes on a more properly hortatory approach, using the disciples' grief as an opportunity to instruct them, and thus remove their pain by showing that it is misplaced. Here Chrysostom takes specific clues again from the Gospel of John. In response to his disciples' sorrow and confusion, Jesus in several places speaks of joy and rejoicing. In 14:28, for instance, he urges, "If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I."<sup>44</sup> In other words, the disciples' sorrow at his departure is misplaced. If only they could see rightly, the disciples would recognize that Jesus' going away is a cause of delight rather than of dismay. Teaching them how to understand the matter properly would dispel their grief. Chrysostom under-

stands this by saying, "Thus he pointed out that their present circumstances should evoke, not grief, but joy."<sup>45</sup>

This scheme is, in fact, a standard means in ancient consolation through which joy is enjoined on people in pain.<sup>46</sup> Stoic ethics were the source of joy-related tropes in Hellenistic and Roman moral philosophy, and, therefore, also in consolation literature. The goal is to be judicious about the things that cause joy, in order to avoid grief when those things are lost. A sage might refrain from placing too much value on an item that was actually insignificant. The thing might be the cause of some joy, but only with appropriate sobriety, and a recognition of the true status of the thing. This would keep the passions in check. Or the sage could, rather than restrain joy, express it totally, but only towards things that were really of importance. To the Stoic, joy was to be found in the life of true virtue, a rejoicing in the virtues of the sage. By reserving one's joy for the things that truly matter, one is able to transcend the vicissitudes of life. Things like death, pain, and poverty do not harm a person who recognizes that life, comfort, and wealth do not bring the true joy that the virtues sustain.

The Johannine Farewell discourses also carefully balance the sorrow that the disciples actually feel with the joy that they should feel.<sup>47</sup> For Chrysostom, however, the disciples do not need to supplant their grief through the wisdom of the Stoic sage, but through paying closer attention to Jesus' commandments. Chrysostom asks, "But why did he repeatedly say the same thing, 'If you love me, keep my commandments'; and: 'He who has my commandments and keeps them'; and: 'if anyone hears my word and keeps it, he it is who loves me. He who does not hear my words, does not love me'?" Chrysostom answers his question as follows:

I think that he was referring indirectly to their grief. He had taught them many truths about his death, for he had said: 'he who hates his life in this world keeps it unto life

everlasting,' and, 'he who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me,' and he was also going to say still others. In reproof of them, therefore, he said, "Do you think that it is out of love that you are grieving about my departure? A proof of love would be, rather, not to be sad.' And it was because he wished to establish this fact with finality that he summarized his discourse by returning to it. For, 'if you loved me,' he declared, 'you would rejoice that I am going to the Father. As it is, however, you endure the prospect of this with fear. But to be so disposed toward death is not the attitude of those who are mindful of my commandments, for you must be crucified if you really love me. And I say this for my words urge you not to be afraid, because of those who kill the body. My Father loves men who are not thus afraid and I do also.'<sup>48</sup>

To love Jesus was not to grieve Jesus' departure, but to understand the significance of the cross in his life and work, as well as in the life of his disciples. To follow Christ, then, carries with it the need to discern the things in which one must place joy. The disciples' grief before the cross reflects their misunderstanding.

But carrying the cross gladly is not the only commandment of Jesus. He urges them in the Farewell Discourses: "Love one another" (John 13:35; 15:12). Not only has Jesus sent the Paraclete to fill the void left by his departure, he has left the disciples in the community of love.<sup>49</sup> The love that the disciples have for one another is also designed to assuage their grief. By following his commandment to love one another, they abide in his love. Chrysostom follows a natural progression from the statement at John 15:11 that to abide in Christ is to keep his commandment to love one another:

If abiding with him is the result of our love of him, and our love of him is manifested by keeping his commandments, and the commandment is that we love one another – therefore, our love for one another results in abiding in God.

This pattern of logic is related to the image of the vine in chapter 15, which provides yet another way in which Jesus will remain with his disciples and they with him. In regard to Jesus' command: Abide in my love, Chrysostom adds the explanation:

...[Lest] they might say: 'When you have made us hateful to all men, then you abandon us and depart from us,' He pointed out that He was not abandoning them, but remained as closely united to them as the branch is to the vine.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, on the theme of love, it should be a consolation to the disciples that Jesus dies out of love for them. He is not leaving them for some disheartening reason, like boredom or hatred, but because of his love for them. "...His very departure from them was motivated, not by coldness, but by love..."<sup>51</sup> Chrysostom repeatedly returns to the love that Jesus has for his disciples, as when he insists:

Do you perceive in how many ways he showed his love? By disclosing secrets; by taking the initiative in seeking eagerly for their friendship; by bestowing great benefits upon them; by enduring the sufferings which he then experienced for their sake. And after this he indicated that he would remain always with those who were going to produce fruit. For they would need to enjoy his assistance and, thus fortified, would bear fruit.<sup>52</sup>

### **Consolation for the Fear of Persecution**

I moved quickly past the mention above of the need to carry the cross of Christ, but will dwell more fully now on this idea, as I move the discussion away from the sadness the disciples have over the departure of Jesus to the fear they have over the suffering he has predicted for them. Here, Chrysostom recognizes several devices that Jesus has established to assuage the fear of the disciples. He begins with the

line from the Gospel: "These things I have spoken to you, that when the time for them has come you may remember them" (John 16:4). On the one hand, Chrysostom recognizes that these predictions will encourage the disciples to believe that Jesus is God, which should bring no small comfort.<sup>53</sup> But he also elaborates on the prediction in another direction, by adding in the voice of Jesus, "I have made these predictions for this reason: that the events might not come upon you unexpectedly and completely confuse you."<sup>54</sup>

Within the consolatory tradition, the Cyrenaics developed the theory that only unexpected pain is hard to bear. Cicero describes this belief as follows:

The Cyrenaics, for their part, claim that distress is not produced by every misfortune, but only by a misfortune which was not foreseen and anticipated. And it is true that unexpectedness makes our distress considerably worse, for everything seems more serious when it happens suddenly.<sup>55</sup>

In this vein, Seneca writes to Marcia, consoling her on the death of her son, in the following way: "blows that are long foreseen fall less violently..."<sup>56</sup>

The mention of suffering also gives Chrysostom another opportunity to demonstrate the deft consolatory hand of Jesus. The Cynics had popularized the virtue of frank speech, and the moral philosophers come to insist that frankness is a necessary component of moral instruction. One must be careful not to crush a person, but one also must speak openly and directly about that person's failings, if there is going to be any moral progress. For this reason, a flatterer was to be avoided at all costs, and the true friend of the philosopher was the one who would speak frankly.<sup>57</sup> Chrysostom insists that Jesus' prediction of suffering for the disciples demonstrates that Jesus is not a flatterer. He is concerned about the disciples' well being and so explains to them openly what they face. Again, speaking in the person of Jesus he exclaims:

For, you will not be able to say that to flatter you I said only those things that would win your favor, or that my words were those of a deceiver. Indeed, if anyone were going to deceive you, he would not make predictions of this kind to you, since they are apt to influence you to change your purpose.<sup>58</sup>

Elsewhere, he adds, as a commentary on the phrase, “I am speaking the truth to you” (John 16:7):

I am not saying what will please you, but, even if you are saddened ten thousand times over, you must hear what it is to your advantage to hear. My presence is surely what you desire, but it is quite the opposite – my absence – that is to your advantage. Moreover, it is characteristic of one who has friends’ interests at heart not to spare them with regard to what is advantageous to them, and not to lead them away from what is good for them.<sup>59</sup>

In this last quotation, we see not only the frank speech of Jesus, but also the insistence that suffering is not harmful and frightening; it is beneficial. There is considerable classical precedent in the claim. Seneca insists, for instance, that the spirit of the philosopher is only revealed in adversity. He writes, “The only contestant who can confidently enter the lists is the man who has seen his own blood, who has felt his teeth rattle beneath his opponent’s fist...who has been downed in body but not in spirit, one who as often as he falls, rises again in greater defiance than before...it is only in this way that the true spirit can be tested.”<sup>60</sup>

In this spirit, when he reflects on what it means for the Father to prune the branches of the vine that bear fruit, Chrysostom offers the following insight: “By this he showed that their trials would make them stronger.”<sup>61</sup>

Suffering, though, does not only produce virtue, according to Chrysostom. It is itself also the product of virtue. John 15:18-16:4 contain the prediction of the world’s hatred, as well as the expulsion of the disciples from the synagogue.



Reflecting on the phrase, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before you" (John 15:18), Chrysostom insists that this hatred should not bother them, but instead "...it was the contrary that ought to worry them."<sup>62</sup> He paraphrases Jesus' comments with the insight, "You ought not to be troubled because you are now hated, but only if you should be loved by the world...So that if you were loved, it is very clear that you would be providing proof of your evil character."<sup>63</sup> To suffer, then, is a sign that they already have achieved enough of a Christian demeanor that they are hated together with their Lord.

A few verses later Chrysostom encounters Christ's insistence: "No servant is greater than his Master. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (John 15:20). Consolation literature, like all moral philosophy, relied not only on philosophical argument to persuade people to a more noble life, but also held up models of virtue for people to follow.<sup>64</sup> In the case of the Christian, the model in suffering is Christ. Chrysostom insists, "If Christ himself, for our sake called a most shameful experience, the cross, 'glory,' how much more ought we to adopt this attitude."<sup>65</sup> Thus, Christians are persecuted because they are associated with the life of Christ, and by enduring this suffering as their glory, they all the more follow Christ.

One final point remains. When Christians are insulted, it is not only Christ who shares their insult, but also the Father.<sup>66</sup> This insight introduces an eschatological tone to the consolation, giving it a decidedly Christian cast. Because the persecutors attack God himself when they attack his people, the persecutors will encounter great punishment. Chrysostom notes, "For this reason, he again said, 'He who hates me hates my Father also,' predicting no light punishment for them by reason of this."<sup>67</sup> The opponents of the Church reject the witness that Christ has offered, and persecute him and his followers, which will lead to judgment. The Spirit not

only fills the void of Jesus' absence, but this judgment is also another dimension of his activity in the world. In explaining John 16:7-11, Chrysostom proclaims:

'But if I go, I will send him to you.' And what is the advantage of this? 'When he has come he will convict the world.' That is, 'They will not do these things with impunity if he comes.'<sup>68</sup>

Moreover, as negative as this future state of affairs is for the persecutors of Christians, the future is that much more beautiful for the Christians who endure their persecution in the name of Christ. For, as Chrysostom turns to his own audience, he urges, "Well, then, when we are going to suffer anything unpleasant we ought to think, not of the hardships involved, but of the crowns to come."<sup>69</sup> Suffering now, hardship now, abstinence now, will reap rewards in heaven. Again, Christian eschatological hope is a cause of consolation.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, Chrysostom has elaborately and extensively read the Farewell Discourses of Jesus as a treatise on consolation, and it is not only as a message from Jesus to his disciples, but also from Jesus to Chrysostom's community. To be sure, in many cases Chrysostom's own rhetorical art recognizes, often through the device of *πρὸς ὁμοίαν*, or speech-in-character, consolatory insights that are the creation of the interpreter, not the evangelist. But Chrysostom's instinct on how these chapters are read should carry the same weight in Johannine studies that it does in Pauline studies. The common opinion regarding the Johannine community is that the Gospel was written by and for a group of people locked in combat with the synagogue. And the Gospel is clearly concerned for those "who do not see and yet believe" (John 20:29). In other words, the Gospel is written for people who lack the presence of Jesus and who need his protection. Consolation literature is appropriate for both matters. In the

current climate of Johannine studies, many are reluctant to see classical literary themes reflected in this most Jewish of the Gospels, but to counter this objection one can say with the confidence of a Pauline scholar, "John Chrysostom was aware that the Gospel of John was referring to this."

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Abraham Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 3.

<sup>2</sup> In explaining Rudolf Bultmann's arguments about John and the Mandaeans in his essay "Die Bedeutung der neuerschlossenen mandäischen und manichäischen Quellen für das Verständnis des Johannesevangeliums," *ZNW* 24 (1925): 100-146, Wayne Meeks writes, "By 1925 Bultmann had before him Lidsbarski's translations of Mandaean texts as well as the descriptions of the Manichaean texts from Turfan," *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, NovTSup 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1967). For a useful summary of Bultmann's theories about the relation between the Gospel of John and Mandaeism, see John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 50-57. See *ibid.*, 205 and *passim*, for the suggestion that John is better understood as an Essene convert to Christianity.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Abraham Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians* (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1987), 58. See also, Stanley Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), who uses Origen elaborately in, among other things, his discussion of Rom 7, in defense of the argument that the chapter exemplifies rhetorical *προσομοία*, 264ff.; Margaret M. Mitchell, "Pauline Accommodation and 'Condescension' (συγκατάβασις): 1 Cor 9:19-23 and the History of Influence," in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 201, where she insists that her reading of this passage has been deeply influenced by the insights gained from reading Church Fathers, especially John Chrysostom. See also her recent study on John Chrysostom, which begins with an acknowledgement of the debt that New Testament scholars owe to interpreters like Chrysostom, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox, 2002), xv.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance, Gen 49, 1 Sam 12, Acts 20 and Luke 22.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday) 2.598.

<sup>7</sup> For a wide range of associations between John 13-17 and Deuteronomy see: A. Lacomara, "Deuteronomy and the Farewell Discourse (Jn 13:31-16:33)" *CBQ* 36 (1974): 65-84; Ashton, *Understanding*, 470 ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 453.

<sup>9</sup> George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 73-85.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, *Hom. Jo.* 72.2 (PG 59:398). He also uses the term παράκλησις to refer to the comfort or encouragement that Jesus gives to the disciples. See, for instance *Hom. Jo.* 70.1 (PG 59:382)

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, *Hom. Jo.* 72.3 (PG 59:393).

<sup>13</sup> All translations of Chrysostom's Homilies on John are taken from Saint John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist*, (trans. Sister Thomas Aquinas Goggin; S.C.H.: New York; Fathers of the Church, 1960). Hereafter, texts will be cited by page numbers in the Goggin translation and from the PG volume. The text cited here is *Hom. Jo.* 78.1 (PG 59:419/Goggin, 338).

<sup>14</sup> See, however, the following two works for the creative and cautious application of rhetorical categories to the Johannine discourses: Harold W. Attridge, "Argumentation in John 5," in *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts* (ed. Anders Eriksson, et al.; Emory Studies in Early Christianity 8; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002) 188-199; C. Clifton Black, "The Words That You Have Given to Me I Have Given to Them: The Grandeur of Johannine Rhetoric," in *Exploring the Gospel of John in Honor of D. Moody Smith* (ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996) 220-39.

<sup>15</sup> Malherbe, Abraham, "Exhortation in First Thessalonians," *NovT* 25 (1983) 65; repr. in *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989) lists the following as examples of each: Dio, *Discourses* 27.7-9; 28; 30; Plutarch, *On Superstition* 168 C; Julian, *Oration* 7.223BC.

<sup>16</sup> *Epist Types*, 5. cf. Holloway, *Consolation*, 60.

<sup>17</sup> Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.34.81. cf. Paul Holloway, *Consolation in Philipppians* (SNTSMS 112; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 60-61.

<sup>18</sup> Cicero, *Ad Fam.*, 5.18. cf. Holloway, *Consolation*, 61.

<sup>19</sup> Seneca, *Ep.* 71. cf. Holloway, *Consolation*, 61

<sup>20</sup> Juvenal *Sat.* 13. cf. Holloway, *Consolation*, 61

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>22</sup> C. E. Manning, *On Seneca's "Ad Marciam."* (Mnemosyne Supplement

69; Leiden, Brill, 1981), 12. For bibliographic material on the fragments, see Holloway, *Consolation*, 58 n.20. Kassel's work has been instrumental in changing the view of Crantor as the sole prototype for all subsequent consolations (R. Kassel, *Untersuchungen zur griechischen und römischen Konsolationsliteratur* [Zetemata 18; Munich, 1958]. cf. J.E. Atkinson, "Seneca's 'Consolatio Ad Polybium,' ANRW 32.2:867-68 and passim.

<sup>23</sup> For these, see Robert C. Gregg, *Consolation Philosophy: Greek and Christian Paideia in Basil and the Two Gregories*. (Patristic Monograph Series 3; Cambridge, MA; Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975).

<sup>24</sup> Manning, *Seneca's, 'Ad Marciam,'* 12.

<sup>25</sup> As early as Thucydides, Pericles says in his funeral oration, "I do not lament; rather, I shall console" 2.44 (Forster Smith, LCL). cf. Holloway, *Consolation*, 62.

<sup>26</sup> 599B (Babbitt, LCL). cf. Holloway, *Consolation*, 62-3.

<sup>27</sup> Plutarch, *Ad Apollonium* 102A (Babbitt, LCL). cf. Holloway, *Consolation*, 63.

<sup>28</sup> *Ep.* 99.2 (Gummere, LCL). cf. Holloway, *Consolation*, 65

<sup>29</sup> *Ep.* 165. cf. Holloway, *Consolation*, 63.

<sup>30</sup> 3.31.76 (Hendrickson, LCL).

<sup>31</sup> Holloway, *Consolation*, 64.

<sup>32</sup> *Tusc.* 3.31.76 (Hendrickson, LCL).

<sup>33</sup> *Ad Helviam*, 14:1.

<sup>34</sup> *Hom. Jo.* 70.2 (PG 59:384/Goggin, 256).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.1 (PG 59:403/Goggin, 300).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 77:2 (PG 59:416/Goggin, 328-9).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.1 (PG 59:382/Goggin 252).

<sup>38</sup> Jesus' understanding of the disciples' fragility is reflected throughout the discourses. At 14:31, where he urges the disciples to leave the Supper with him, Chrysostom sees this as an attempt to soften their anxiety, since they felt that they would be vulnerable if they remained in the same place. Jesus, of course, did this out of condescension to their weakness, since he was not afraid. *Ibid.*, 76.1 (PG 59:409-11).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.1 (PG 59:403/Goggin, 300-01)

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.1 (PG 59:404).

<sup>41</sup> *Ad Marciam* 5.6 (Basore, LCL). Citing an example from another's behavior, he says: "After this he directed her to the son that was still alive, he directed her to the children of the son she had lost."

<sup>42</sup> For a detailed study of this trope in classical literature, ranging from Aeschylus to Ovid and beyond, see Maurizio Bettini, *The Portrait of the Lover* (trans. Laura Gibbs; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1999).

<sup>43</sup> The story centers on Butades, a potter from Sicyon who later creates pottery in Corinth. Pliny writes as follows (*Natural History* 35.151[Rackham, LCL]):

“It may be suitable to append to these remarks something about the plastic art. It was through the service of that same earth that modeling portraits from clay was first invented by Butades, a potter of Sicyon, at Corinth. He did this owing to his daughter, who was in love with a young man; and she, when he was going abroad, drew in outline on the wall the shadow of his face thrown by a lamp. Her father pressed clay on this and made a relief, which he hardened by exposure to fire with the rest of his pottery....”

<sup>44</sup> Moloney writes in regard to the Johannine passage, “Untroubled hearts, without fear in face of his departure, are the guarantee that they have heard his words and are holding fast to them.” *Glory not Dishonor* (Minneapolis; Fortress, 1998) 50.

<sup>45</sup> *Hom Jo.* 77.1 (PG 59:421/Goggin, 325).

<sup>46</sup> In this survey of joy in consolation literature, I am dependent on Holmway, *Consolation*, 78-83. Stoic ethics urged the eradication of the passions, and their replacement with the “rational emotions” of the Stoic sage. In this scheme, joy (χαρά) was the opposite of grief (λύπη).

<sup>47</sup> The Farewell Discourses, especially in chapter 16, present a consistent alternation between the two poles of the disciples’ sorrow, λύπη (16:6, 20, 21), and the joy, χαρά, urged by Jesus (14:28; 15:11; 16:20, 22, 24).

<sup>48</sup> *Hom Jo.* 75.2 (PG 59:406 /Goggin, 305-306).

<sup>49</sup> Seneca urges people to make new friends to replace the lost ones. *Eps.* 63:10,11.

<sup>50</sup> *Hom Jo.* 76.2 (PG 59:412/Goggin 32-21).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.1 (PG 59:415 /Goggin, 326).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.2 (PG 59:415 /Goggin, 327).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.4 (PG 59:408/Goggin,310).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.3 (PG 59:418 /Goggin, 332).

<sup>55</sup> *Tusculan Disputations*, 3.13.28. Translation from Margaret Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations 3 and 4* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) 15. cf. Constantine C. Grollios, *Seneca’s Ad Marciam: Tradition and Originality* (Athens: G.S. Christou and Son, 1956), 44.

<sup>56</sup> 9.3 (Basore, LCL)

<sup>57</sup> See the essays in John T. Fitzgerald, ed., *Friendship, Flattery and Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World* (NovTSup 82: Leiden; Brill, 1996)

<sup>58</sup> *Hom. Jo.* 77.3 (PG 59:417-18 /Goggin, 332).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 78.1 (PG 59:421/Goggin, 340).

<sup>60</sup> Seneca, *Epistle* 13 (Gummer, LCL). cf. Gregg, *Consolation Philosophy*, 181.

<sup>61</sup> *Hom. Jo.* 76.1 (PG 59:411 /Goggin, 318).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 77.2 (PG 59:416, Goggin, 328).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 77.2 (PG 59:416/Goggin, 328).

<sup>64</sup> Holloway, *Consolation*, 64.

<sup>65</sup> *Hom. Jo.* 77.4 (PG 59:418/Goggin, 333).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 77.2 (PG 59:416/Goggin, 329).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 77.2 (PG 59:416/Goggin, 329).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 78:1 (PG 59:421/Goggin, 341).

<sup>69</sup> *Hom. Jo.* 77.4 (PG 59:418/Goggin, 333).

<sup>70</sup> Malherbe notes the consolatory quality of the same eschatological tone in 1 Thess. See *Paul and the Thessalonians*, 59.

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## **Paul's Ecumenical Mission**

CHRISTOS K. ECONOMOU

In this paper I will explore the material in the Pauline Epistles and the Book of Acts demonstrating Paul's ecumenical mission. First, I will examine the evidence that indicates his confinement in an introversive Jewish-centeredness, constituting the negative elements opposing the ecumenical orientation of Judaism and, by extension, of Paul's preaching. Then, I will take up the conversion of Saul, who, from persecutor of Christianity became a witness of the Gospel to the Gentiles, and joined in the task of spreading the message of salvation "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

For a clear treatment of the subject I shall divide this paper in three parts: in the first part I will briefly mention Paul's autobiographical references to his Jewish identity. In the second part I will trace his work as persecutor, an opposing element to the ecumenical mission. Finally, in the third part I will focus on Paul's call, which is the basis for his ecumenical mission. In this way I will try to give an answer to two fundamental questions:

a) Is Paul's ecumenical mission merely a natural development of the historical facts, as supported by those historians who use determinism as the only approach to historical issues? Or is it a matter which Paul, in his Epistles, and Luke, in the Book of Acts, wish to interpret in the light of the history of salvation?

b) Is it an event that can only be interpreted through polit-

ical, social and psychological facts or should the historical-theological facts be approached through a pneumatological perspective?

At the outset I must stress that the premise underlying my inquiry into Paul's ecumenical mission is the ecumenical mission of Jesus himself, of his disciples, and generally of the primitive Church, as well. This forms the historical-theological background of the treatment of my subject.

### **Paul's Jewish Descent**

As Paul himself notes, he was a genuine Israelite, a Jew by birth and breeding, a descendant of Abraham (Rom 11:1). He was circumcised as an eight-day-old infant and he came from Benjamin's tribe: "circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee" (Phil 3:5). Paul refers to his Jewish past, underlining both the external signs which prove his belonging to Israel, and his other Judaic prerogatives, such as circumcision on the eighth day, as mandated in the Law (Gen 17:12, 21:4; Lev 12:3). He came from the house of Israel (cf. Matt 10:6, 15:24; Acts 2:36), from God's own people, the people of the covenant. He uses the expression "Hebrew of Hebrews" for himself stressing that he not only descended from the stock of Israel, but also remained loyal to his people's traditions and manners (Phil 3:5; cf. 2 Cor 11:22). This fidelity gave him the right to boast of his more advanced development in Judaism than many of his compatriots: "I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers" (Gal 1:14).

He knew both Hebrew and Greek, since he was born and brought up in the Diaspora. As far as the interpretation of the Law was concerned, he was a member of the Pharisees, which explains why he was distinguished for the strict keep-

ing of the letter of the Law: "as to righteousness under the law, blameless" (Phil 3:6). To corroborate his status, he especially called for his compatriots to testify that he had lived according to the most rigorous principles of the Jewish religion: "They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee" (Acts 26:5).

Paul's autobiographical elements found in his Epistles are completed by information from the Book of Acts which states that he was a Jew born in Tarsus in Cilicia, citizen of a famous city (Acts 22:3), from a father who was a Roman citizen, and that is why he himself was a Roman citizen by birth (Acts 22:28).

Speaking to fellow Jews in his defense, Paul explicitly mentioned that he was a Jew born in Tarsus in Cilicia but brought up in Jerusalem. His teacher was Gamaliel, the famous teacher of the Law, who strictly taught him the Law of Moses, that of his forefathers. That is why he was zealous for God, as were all dedicated Jews (Acts 22:3). According to the apocryphal Acts of Barnabas, Paul in Jerusalem studied together with the Cypriot Levite Barnabas. This helps to explain Barnabas' intervention in presenting Saul the persecutor to the Apostles and the subsequent cooperation between the two in mission.

All these elements show that Paul was a fanatic zealot Jew, a condition which made it normal for him to seek to persecute the Christian Church to the death.

### **Paul's Jewish-Centeredness as Cause of His Work as Persecutor**

In the Book of Acts, Luke introduces Paul at the moment of the stoning of Stephen, the First Martyr. The raging crowd dragged the Hellenist deacon outside the city and began throwing stones at him. The witnesses for the prosecu-

tion, who according to the Mosaic Law were to throw the fist stones, left their clothes at the feet of young Saul: "the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul" (Acts 7:58). Luke leaves no room for doubt about Saul's participation in the stoning as he immediately adds that Saul approved of Stephen's death: "And Saul was consenting to his death" (Acts 8:1). Commenting on this editorial intervention of Luke, St. John Chrysostom points out that it was made so that God's intervention in Paul's life could be demonstrated, followed by the conversion of the persecutor for the work of evangelization. Naturally, St. John Chrysostom stresses that at the point of stoning, Saul did not believe at all, but agreed and went along with the leaders of the stoning (PG 60:142).

According to the evidence of Acts, Saul did not limit himself to the event of Stephen's stoning and the approval of the death of the First Martyr. Saul himself started a work of persecution, which was the result of his religious and racial fanaticism rooted in the zeal for his ancestral traditions. He devastated the Church by breaking violently into houses and arresting men and women and putting them in prison: "But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3; cf. Acts 22:4). Saul's dedication to the observance of the Law is the theological presupposition behind his work of persecution. The verb "διώκω" ("persecute") used by Paul (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:23; Acts 22:4) is characteristic of his conduct prior to his conversion. The deepest reason for which Paul persecuted the Church was his zealous commitment to the Jewish Law.

This attitude of Saul against the Christians is a landmark in his life which he does not fail to mention often in his Epistles. In the Epistle to the Galatians he refers to this persecution of the Church of God: "you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God

violently and tried to destroy it" (Gal 1:13).

Here we encounter a zealot Jew blinded by his commitment to ancestral tradition. His work of persecution against Christians had a deep theological content. There are no other reasons to which we can attribute this attitude of Saul towards the Church. His conviction was that the Law alone saves and not Christ. That is why it was quite natural for him to regard Stephen's speech (Acts 7:1-52) as a blasphemy against the Temple and the Law. This was also the reason why Saul started a relentless persecution against Christians. While he was bound to his ancestral traditions (Gal 1:14), he was functioning according to the Jewish exclusiveness based on the Law, not able to see in broader perspective the existence of an alternative option in Christ. The problem was soteriological: whether salvation could be obtained through the Law or through Christ. Saul was confined within the concept of salvation only through observance of the Law.

The Law was synonymous with Judaism. For him, rejection of the Law meant rejection of his own religion. That is why his reaction led him to the extremes of his acts of persecution. For Saul the Jew, the work of persecution was an act of faith and love, even towards the victims who, in his opinion, were misled by those who preached the Lord Jesus of Nazareth. Christians recognized Jesus as the Messiah announced by the prophets. For Saul, this was a misinterpretation of the prophetic message. Putting aside the Law amounted to religious and national treason. This was the theological foundation behind Saul's fanatical zeal, turning him into a defender of the ancestral tradition.

It becomes clear that through these historical facts and theological considerations it is not possible for anyone to imagine the idea of an "ecumenical mission of Paul." For one such as Saul the persecutor, everything begins and ends in the narrow frame of national exclusiveness. As such, there

was no opening into an ecumenical mission of Christianity. However, the human failure was given a solution by God himself in Paul's call to Christ and the proclamation of the gospel.

### **St. Paul's Ecumenical Mission Interwoven with His Call**

In his Epistle to the Galatians, Paul understands his call as something sudden, equivalent to the call of the prophets in the Old Testament. He has the sense that God had chosen him from his mother's womb and suddenly decided on the historical moment which he, God, judged as the most proper to call him to service: "But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood" (Gal 1:15-16). Theophylactos of Ochrid, commenting on Paul's election, says characteristically: "And God had chosen him not because of his origin but because he knew in advance that he was worthy" (Ἀφώρισε δὲ αὐτὸν ὁ Θεός, οὐ κατὰ ἀποκλήρωσιν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ πρόγνωσιν τοῦ ἄξιον εἶναι, PG 124:964).

When God judged that the time was right to reveal his Son to Saul so that he would bring the joyful message of salvation to the Gentiles, the apostle did not depend on human power but simply gave himself up to God's grace. Consequently, Saul was chosen and marked out from his mother's womb for the work of the mission to Gentiles. In this way the ecumenicity of Paul's mission was predetermined by God's providence but it was manifested at a specific moment in the apostle's life.

It is characteristic that the period of Paul's life before his call not only fails to show any signs of an ecumenical missionary vision, but on the contrary testifies to the oppo-

site. As far as Saul the persecutor was concerned, historical and logical criteria absolutely precluded the possibility that Jewish exclusiveness could be transformed into an ecumenical mission to the Gentiles. It is obvious here that we cannot speak of development, but of God's call and the consecration of Saul to be the Apostle of the Gentiles. Paul writes of this himself in the Epistle to the Galatians, and Luke also reports the conversion and apostolic summons in the three parallel narratives in Acts (9:1-19, 22:6-21, 26:12-23). This is also a critical interpretive position of many eastern Fathers, including Theophylactos of Ochrid.

During his work of persecution, Saul exerted himself to the utmost. He went to the high priest and asked for recommendation letters to use in the synagogues of Damascus in order to bind and bring to Jerusalem any men or women who followed Christ (Acts 9:1-2). But under Paul's threatening murderous disposition lay hidden the mystery of his conversion from Judaism to Christianity and at the same time his ecumenical mission to the Gentiles. These are elements which go beyond historical determinism and rationalism and enter the field of theological interpretation of salvific history. In such events God is revealed as the Lord of history. This is the reality conveyed by Luke with his use of the word "suddenly" (Acts 9:3), which shows the power and immanence of divine intervention even in the lives and actions of human persons. Oikoumenios quite aptly remarks: "By presenting himself as persecutor previously and now suddenly converted, Paul intends to show that he could not be changed so quickly unless there had been some divine revelation to him" (Βούλεται ἐκ τοῦ δεῖξαι ἑαυτὸν πρότερον διώκτην καὶ νῦν ἐξαίφνης μεταβεβλημένον κατασκευάσαι, ὅτι μὴ θεία τις αὐτῷ ἀποκάλυψις ἐγεγόνει, οὐ ἂν οὕτω μετεβλήθη ταχέως. PG 118:1097).

In the first narrative of Paul's call (Acts 9:1-9), Luke presents the resurrected Christ as defining Saul's responsibilities.

After Saul's free acceptance of the call, Christ announces to a hesitant Ananias the new mission of Paul, which is none other than making the name of Jesus known to the Gentiles, to their rulers and the people of Israel. "Go," Christ says to Ananias, "for he is a chosen vessel of mine to bear my name before the Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). This verse signifies a triple mission for Paul with three clearly ecumenical dimensions, and the three parallel narratives in Acts correspond to Paul's triple mission (9:1-19, 22:6-21, 26:12-23). The Church Fathers interpret Paul's mission as the mandate to spread the good news to the whole world: "He (Christ) says that he (Paul) will not only be a believer," Oikoumenios points out, "but a teacher and a preacher to the known world too, and he will also suffer a lot for me. That is why he says that I have chosen him and he will make my name known" (Οὐ μόνον πιστὸς ἔσται, φησὶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ διδάσκαλος καὶ κήρυξ τῆς οἰκουμένης ἀλλὰ καὶ πείσεται πολλὰ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ. Διὰ τοῦτο δέ φησιν ὅτι σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς μοί ἐστι καὶ ὅτι βαστάσαι τὸ ὄνομά μου (PG 118:169).

The mission begins with Jesus' announcement to Ananias. It is at this point that the persecutor becomes persecuted, the narrow minded Jew changes to a man who loves the entire world, the exclusiveness of the Jews turns into an ecumenical mission to the Gentiles. The choice of Christ or Law becomes a constitutive belief for salvation through Jesus Christ, the persecuted Lord who appeared to Saul and said: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5).

In First Corinthians, Paul himself considers his call as a consequence of the appearance of the resurrected Christ. He recounts it as the last appearance to the apostles: "The last of all he was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor 15:8-9). This fact later gave the right to Paul to defend



his apostolic office in the Epistle to the Galatians stressing that the Gospel he preached did not come from a man; he did not receive it from and he was not taught by a man, but “it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal 1:12). The Church Fathers support the fact that Paul learned the truth of the Gospel through revelation. Theophylactos stresses: “He is about to prove to them that he truly left the Law, that is why he mentions his previous way of living and his sudden conversion showing that he would not have suddenly been converted unless he had not been divinely informed. That is why he says, ‘I did not receive it from any human being,’ that is, I had no one as a teacher but I became a disciple of Christ himself” (Μέλλει δεῖξαι αὐτοῖς ὅτι μετέστη κατ’ ἀλήθειαν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο μέμνηται τοῦ προτέρου βίου καὶ τῆς ἀθρόας μεταβολῆς δεικνὺς ὅτι οὐκ ἂν μετέστη ἀθρόον, εἰ μὴ θειότεραν τινὰ πληροφορίαν ἔσχεν. Διὸ καὶ φησὶν ὅτι ‘οὐκ ἔστι κατ’ ἄνθρωπον τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου’ τοῦτέστιν, οὐκ ἄνθρωπον ἔσχον διδάσκαλον, ἀλλ’ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ γέγονα μαθητής (PG 124:961).

The conversion of Saul the persecutor to “Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God” (1 Cor 1:1) was followed, according to the evidence from Acts, by a new Pentecost. When Ananias arrived at the house where Paul was accommodated, he told him that he was sent by the Lord Jesus, the one who appeared to him on the road to Damascus. The purpose of his mission was to help him see: “that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 9:17). Then at once something like scales fell from his eyes and he saw again. After that he stood up and was baptized (Acts 9:18).

Just as the apostles after Pentecost started preaching to those gathered “from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5), so also Paul, who was with the disciples in Damascus, from the very beginning preached in the synagogues that Jesus is

the Son of God (Acts 9:19-20). He testified to them that Jesus is the Messiah, that is, the Savior of all men and leader of the new people of God, of the Church (Acts 9:22). According to the theology of Acts, then, the descent of the Holy Spirit is the presupposition for mission. Mission is an outflow of the descent of the Holy Spirit.

The ecumenicity of Paul's mission is also stressed in the second narrative of Acts recounting his call and conversion to Christianity (22:6-21). Here we find a speech in his own defense over against his fellow Jews, in which he gives an account of his previous persecution of the Christians and of the transformative fact of his call. The central point of the narrative is that God chose Paul to know his will, to see Christ, and to hear his voice coming from his own mouth (Acts 22:14). With this experience, which corresponds to that of the apostles after the resurrection, Paul, too, becomes a witness to all of what he saw and heard. "For you will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard" (Acts 22:15). This ecumenical mission is also mandated by the order which Jesus gives to him while in a mystical vision at the Temple in Jerusalem: "Depart; for I will send you far away from here to the Gentiles" (Acts 22:21). It is a mission which would be mainly directed to the Gentiles, that is, to the pagans who were distant to the true faith, the true worship and the revelation of the Son and Word of God, of the Messiah Jesus Christ.

All the above fall completely into line with the respective mission which the resurrected Lord assigned to the disciples and which is described by Luke at the beginning of Acts: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Quite clearly, the announcement is that the apostles will receive power from the descent of the Holy Spirit and will be witnesses for the resurrected Christ to all nations of the

known world. In the same way, Paul is sent to the Gentiles as the apostle of the resurrected Christ. That is why he is called at the proper time when the apostles' preaching had already started its course to the ends of the earth. The immediate cause was the persecution that broke out against the Church of Jerusalem where Saul had a major part. According to Paul's own admission, all the inhabitants of Palestine and the Diaspora also knew that he persecuted the Christians and even more, when Stephen's blood was shed, young Saul was there approving of the murder and guarding the clothes of those who stoned him (Acts 22:19-20). This knitting together of the drama and the tragedy, the persecution and the conversion, are elements that are integrated in the Book of Acts and which match salvation history and theology in the most harmonious way.

The third narrative in Acts recounting Paul's call has as the central point, as well, the ecumenicity of Paul's mission (26:12-23). After Jesus' revelation on the road to Damascus, Saul was ordered was to serve Christ as a witness of what he saw and of what would be shown to him: "I will deliver you from the Jewish people as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I send you" (Acts 26:17). Paul's mission, at this point as well, was clearly ecumenical in character, which was confirmed by his address to king Agrippa. According to the narrative, the apostle began to preach at once in Damascus, then in Jerusalem, and after that to the Gentiles in other places, urging all to repent and return to God: "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance" (Acts 26:19-20).

The ecumenicity of Paul's mission is clearly shown by an interpretative approach to the three parallel narratives of his call in Acts. His mission to the Gentiles is the fulfillment

of the charge that Jesus gave him on the road to Damascus. The same charge had previously been given to the other disciples, after Christ's resurrection. In this way Paul, too, is reckoned as an apostle: the ecumenical commission confers the role of apostle on Paul as it had on Jesus' other disciples. In other words, Paul's mission and its ecumenical objectives are not a new charge but an old one which Christ had previously given to the disciples and to the primitive Church.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that the spirit of Paul's mission is not just a matter for academic research. Rather, it forms the basis, the foundation and the guideline for the ecumenical character of the Church's mission in the world. That is to say, the ecumenical spirit is a dynamic which impels a living Church to come to terms with the entire world, through ecumenical dialogues of an inter-orthodox, inter-confessional, and interreligious character. At the same time, such a Church must also contend with modern humanity as it is engaged in everyday idolatry, decay and death. This is the urgent significance of the ecumenical mission of Paul and of the Church.

### Summary

I can summarize this paper with the following conclusions:

1. According to his autobiographical notes, Paul was indeed a strict Jew, who belonged to the class of the Pharisees. Of this Jewish identity he was especially proud prior to his call to Christ, in terms of his spiritual progress, which was more advanced than that of his fellow Jews, and of his exceeding zeal displayed by strict observance of the traditions of his ancestors. The evidence of the Epistles agrees with and completes that from the Acts concerning the life and personality of Saul.
2. Saul fanatically embraced the religion of the Mosaic

Law and this confined him to a Jewish introversion. His persistence in the ancestral faith and his conviction that salvation was accomplished only through the Law led him to persecute the Christians. His conscious participation in the stoning of Stephen and the systematic persecution against the primitive Church are elements that marked decisively his whole life and prevented him from taking the step towards freedom.

3. Saul encountered an acute dilemma: how the salvation of man is to be reached, through the Law or in Jesus Christ. The answer was revealed to him by his call on the road to Damascus. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law. Salvation is accomplished in the crucified and resurrected Christ. This Christocentric soteriology led the ex-persecutor of the Church to become the Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul's call was the presupposition for his ecumenical mission. In this way he was led from a Jewish introversion to an ecumenical mission, his conscious choice and blessed task to the end of his life.

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## **Perspectives in Orthodox Biblical Interpretation**

THEODORE G. STYLIANOPOULOS

The interpretation of the Bible in harmony with the Bible's own nature and witness achieves its proper goal through the application of several, interrelated, foundational principles, among them the following, not necessarily in hierarchical order. One principle is fidelity to the witness of the Bible as the word of God, the primary record of revelation, and thus the supreme source of knowledge pertaining to God, human beings, the world, and salvation. A second is fidelity to the common tradition of the ancient Church, as the tradition of apostolic truth, centered on the gospel of Christ, and enacted in the life of the Church through worship, proclamation, teaching, practice, and mission. A third is fidelity to earnest, discerning, critical study through the use of reason as a gift of God, yet operative within the horizon of active faith adequate to the apprehension of the transcendent realities testified by the biblical texts. And fourth is fidelity to the Holy Spirit by whose grace alone is the ultimate goal of the reading of Scripture and the appropriation of its spiritual efficacy accomplished in faithful and obedient hearts; that is, the experience of the mystery of God in his holy presence and renewing power, the primary subject matter of Scripture. The integration and practice of the above principles, and their correlatives, form an authentic and comprehensive interpretative perspective that variously places readers, hearers, and interpreters of the Bible, and their quest, in unity with the communion of saints, particularly the prophets, the apos-

tles and the great Christian teachers of the past, the Church Fathers, all faithful servants, and authoritative witnesses of God's gracious words and deeds for the life of the world.

### **Fidelity to Scripture**

The Scriptures constitute "the oracles of God" (τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ, Rom 3:2) communicated through inspired men and women "in many and diverse ways" (Heb 1:1), including words, deeds, laws, rites, narratives, dreams, visions, symbols, images, and parables. By such various means did God choose to disclose knowledge of his will, his saving wisdom, his summons to human beings, and ultimately personal knowledge of himself, in order freely to draw humanity to be his covenant people. The supreme expression of God's self-disclosure is through the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and awaited glorious appearance of his Son, Jesus Christ, "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:8), who forms the center of revelation and marks the unity of the Old and New Testaments. In view of its nature as the record of the self-disclosure of God and knowledge of his saving will – God himself being the primary author and subject matter of the Scriptures – the Bible bears intrinsic and undisputed authority for teaching, correction, and the life of righteousness (2 Tim 3:16), an authority acknowledged and formalized by the process of its canonization by the Church. The primacy of Scripture entails that nothing in the life of the Church must contradict the biblical message and spirit. Any usage or interpretation of the Bible apart from the principle of fidelity to the witness of Scripture as the record of God's self-disclosure will fall short of attaining its appropriate hermeneutical efficacy.

But the nature of Scripture also necessarily involves the paradox that the oracles of God are communicated through the words of human beings who spoke and wrote in Hebrew,

Aramaic, and Greek. This paradox is an indispensable aspect of the nature of revelation itself that does not occur in a vacuum but rather involves free, willing, thinking, and acting human agents. The Old and New Testaments, in their variety of books, authors, language, style, perspectives, depth of insight, and historical origins and development, amply demonstrate the truth of the “humanity” of the Bible. Biblical authors, for example the Apostle Paul, had some sense of this paradox in that they drew a distinction between letter and spirit in the sacred writings (2 Cor 3:6). The theologians of the ancient Church, such as Origen, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, and Cyril of Alexandria, confronted by repeated issues of interpretation, reflected more consciously on the human character of Scripture, which they explained as a form of divine condescension (συγκατάβασις) to human weakness, yet without compromising the authority and essential clarity of Scripture’s divine message. In modern times a vast scholarly tradition of literary and historical studies has thoroughly exposed the human contingencies of the biblical books and authors to the extent that academic experts have often rejected the Bible’s divine inspiration, unity and canonical authority, a long-term cultural trend proven as unwise as it is useless.

However, grappling with the paradox of Scripture’s divine and human character is a necessary part of the interpretative task, a matter that can neither be ignored through pietism, nor evaded through clever answers by well-intentioned defenders of strict forms of verbal inerrancy. The parallel theological paradigm is the mystery of the incarnation – the revelation of the mystery of God in the person and ministry of the unique Son who was born, grew in wisdom, suffered hunger and pain, and died a true death as a human being, but also disclosed the reality of God’s character and kingdom, rose from the dead in the power of the Spirit, and defeated the forces of evil and death. The challenge is how,

by means of interpretative discernment, to keep in balance the divine and human aspects of the mysteries of Christ and Scripture, and to do so on the basis of, and in harmony with, the internal evidence of the sacred texts themselves, according to their intrinsically bonded theological and historical testimony. This task cannot be fulfilled apart from a dynamic view of inspiration, which takes into consideration not only the rich variety of authors and texts themselves, but also the community of faith in which the biblical books were generated and gradually gained the status of sacred texts. Indeed, another definitive aspect of the nature of the Bible is its communal and traditional character.

### **Fidelity to Tradition**

Just as theology cannot be separated from history, so also Scripture as a holy book cannot be disjoined from the communal context in which it originated, took shape, and was variously used. These contexts are namely, Israel and Church. The very idea of biblical revelation, indispensably involving active human partners, means that God's self-disclosure creates covenant relationships and covenant communities. Prior to the composition of texts, God's revealed words and deeds were proclaimed and interpreted by communal leaders and prophets. They were then received and transmitted as oral tradition in the community of faith, and eventually recorded in documents. In Israel, no less than in the early Church, diverse claims concerning God's revelation had to be tested and resolved within the life of the community, which possessed the discerning, and thus normative, criterion of true and false prophecy. The determining factor was not any single individual but the community and its faith tradition, acknowledging the witness of authentic leaders and prophets, preserving their writings, and eventually canonizing them as sacred books. Decisive new claims with extraordinary impact on people's lives, such as in the case of

Jesus, created a new community, the early Church. In either case, Israel or Church, the functional principle remained the same: the ongoing community of faith was the living context of the proclamation, reception, interpretation, transmission, and application of revelation, whether oral or written.

Historical scholarship has indisputably demonstrated the organic bond between the community of faith and its revealed tradition. Already in the oral period, both gospel and sacred rite had attained the status of tradition in the life of the Church (1 Cor 11:23; 15:3). Thus fidelity to the authority and witness of the Bible is also fidelity to the community of faith, its tradition and life, its integrity and mission. Just as without the good news about Christ there could be no Church, so also without the Church there could be no viable proclamation of the good news. The creation and sustenance of community is a constitutive part of revelation and its interpretation. Moreover, the long process of the canonization of the Scriptures, the written record of revelation, unambiguously attests to the mutually supportive and interdependent relationship between Bible and Church. These considerations mean that Bible, Church and tradition cannot be played off against each other. Neither the Bible over Church and tradition, nor Church and tradition over the Bible, are justifiable positions. While the Church, through its tradition and active discernment, gave rise to the biblical canon, the primacy of the biblical canon holds the Church accountable to the scriptural witness as the standard of the Church's faith and life. In the end, the true problematic of interpretation lies not at the level of formal principles pertaining to the relationships between text, community, and tradition, operative consciously or unconsciously in all religious communities, but in the specifics of interpretation at key points such as the understanding of the gospel and the definition of normative tradition, where critical judgment and discernment become preeminent.

### **Fidelity to Critical Study**

The pursuit and knowledge of truth necessarily require discernment and critical judgment. The biblical authors themselves were inevitably engaged in discernment and critical assessment at the level of life. For example, the Apostle Paul was wholly devoted to the advancement of the gospel and the care of the Church through interpretative discernment in preaching and teaching, authoritative appeals to apostolic commission and received traditions, as well as to persuasive argumentation and pastoral exhortation. All the New Testament authors were involved in a similar process of critical judgment, going beyond the mere announcement of the gospel and involving such matters as the christological interpretation of the Old Testament, the formation of creedal confessions, the proper use of the gifts of the Spirit, the relations between Jews and Christians, the meaning of baptism and the Lord's Supper, the role of authority and order in the Church, the resolution of internal and external points of conflict, as well as appropriate ethical conduct. These authors and interpreters came to the table with life-defining experiences and convictions that decisively influenced their interpretative stance. Along with their faith in the risen Lord and the guidance of the Spirit, however, they were necessarily engaged in critical reflection and had, not without disputes and diversity, to work out patterns of faith and life in urgent concern about the truth of the gospel and the unity of the Church (Matt 18:15-18; Acts 6:1-6; 15:22-29; Rom 6:17; 1 Cor 4:17; 8:4-6; 11:2; Gal 1:9; 5:2-4; Col 2:6-23; 1 Thess 4:1-2; 2 Thess 2:15; 1 Tim 1:3-4; 4:1-3; 1 John 4:1-3; 1 Pet 5:1-5; Jude 3).

The Church Fathers, equally faced with numerous theological and pastoral issues, exercised hermeneutical judgment in a more reflective way. At one level, while grounded in the presuppositions of Christ and Spirit as dominant

hermeneutical criteria, they made free and diverse use of known exegetical methods, such as allegorical, typological, grammatical, and textual, derived from both the Jewish and Greek traditions, and in some ways already found in the New Testament. At another level, having to contend with colossal Gnostic distortions of the biblical texts, and much later with the rather sophisticated, but nonetheless fundamentalist, exegesis of the Arians and Eunomians, the Church Fathers moved simultaneously toward more historical, contextual and doctrinal approaches to Scripture. They invoked and explicated such key principles as the centrality of Christ and the Spirit, the authority of the received apostolic tradition, the Church's bond with the Scriptures, the operative doctrinal sense of the community as a whole ("rule of faith"), and the closely related process of canonization of the Bible. Over against the Gnostic and Arian alternatives, and as a result of long debates over specific texts, a preeminent achievement in patristic study of the Bible was the focus on the contextual meaning and spirit of the scriptural texts by means of critical study and discernment of their primary aim (σκοπός) and sequence of thought (ἀκολουθία); that is to say, the interpretation of the parts in the light of the whole and of the whole in the light of its parts. At stake were not just incidental or legalistic matters of faith, but the very core of the apostolic tradition of the gospel – the central teachings of the Bible regarding the creator God, the true incarnation of his Word, the authenticity of the Spirit's workings, the understanding of salvation of soul and body, the role of sacred rites and unity in the Church, the norms of ethical conduct, and the acknowledgment of the true Scriptures. The intent was not to stifle variety, in which the patristic literature is rich, but to maintain viable unity of life and thought on the basis of the truth of the gospel and for the benefit of the pastoral nurture of the Church, two abiding goals of biblical interpretation. In this perspective, the patristic theological tradition,

largely a tradition of biblical study, through the formation of the scriptural canon and the interpretative tradition that closely accompanied the canon, marks a classic achievement and standard for all Christian generations.

In modern times the dominant methods of biblical criticism, which have developed in a long and complex academic tradition heavily influenced by the Enlightenment, have produced a paradox of their own. On the one hand, through formal and systematic studies, biblical criticism has yielded brilliant results moving far beyond the exegetical work of the Church Fathers especially pertaining to the analysis of innumerable literary, historical, and theological aspects of the Bible. It has produced not only a rich array of tools and methodologies, but also elucidated a whole array of biblical institutions, concepts and themes, such as election and covenant, prophecy and eschatology, kingdom and righteousness. In the process it has shed welcome ecumenical light on major divisive issues such as Bible and tradition, law and gospel, word and sacrament, faith and works. Perhaps its greatest attraction, both in its "modern" and "postmodern" versions, is its insistence on critical judgment toward fresh readings of the Scriptures. On the other hand, captivated by philosophical presuppositions and cultural trends, biblical criticism has also been marred by bias, hypercriticism, and utterly conflicting proposals, as well as loss of the sense of the theological and spiritual grandeur of the Bible. Not the least among these flaws has been the arrogance of exclusive claims to being the only "scientific" and truly "critical" study, judging all other approaches as either "pre-critical" or "non-critical." The crux of the problem, created by philosophical assumptions as much as the diversity of methodologies, is that, while the ideal of biblical criticism is to provide fresh access to the voice of the Bible, it seems to arrive at the chaotic result of dismantling the Scriptures, undermining the authority of their witness, and providing few commensurate



benefits to either Church or society. This virtual bankruptcy of academic biblical studies can be overcome only by vigorous self-criticism that leads to serious regard for the authority and theological claims of Scripture, the legitimacy of traditional approaches to the Bible, such as kerygmatic, devotional, liturgical, and doctrinal approaches, and an epistemological humility according to which autonomous reason and imagination do not necessarily have the last word regarding what the Scriptures are all about.

### **Fidelity to the Holy Spirit**

If the Bible calls for faith not in itself but in the living God, then the goal of interpretation cannot reach its fullness by intellectual analysis alone, whether literary, or historical, or even theological at a conceptual level. Scripture itself teaches that salvation is by grace; that is, through the direct personal encounter with God in his mercy, and not by any privileged body of knowledge, including scholarly historical erudition. Salvation by grace, however, essentially entails the engagement not only of reason but also of faith, repentance, commitment, love, and holiness of life as ways of knowledge of and communion with the mystery of God. In this hermeneutical context, the usage and interpretation of the Bible requires fidelity to the Holy Spirit, God's own power and initiative, that alone opens access to the transcendent realities testified by the biblical texts, transforms receptive human hearts and minds into a new creation, and decisively qualifies an interpreter's hermeneutical vision regarding the Bible, the Church, and everything else.

Hermeneutically, therefore, several levels of interpretation must be distinguished, for example, historical, theological, and mystical, all ideally related but having their own hermeneutical elements, nuances and goals. Historical exegesis, requiring extensive technical training, seeks the orig-

inal meaning of texts by the canons of historical research, yet without the hidden bias of philosophical and cultural assumptions. The objectives are the analysis and reconstruction of the entire biblical world: its literature, history, theology, institutions, and manners, according to the historical context of each biblical book and author. Such a task is, in principle, common to all scholars, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, or interested and trained others, all mindful and self-critical of their own presuppositions and their danger of interference in the pursuit of historical understanding.

Theological interpretation, also requiring technical training, concentrates on the theological claims and themes of the Bible as normative truth and saving message for all, a task bringing into play an interpreter's faith convictions, philosophical views, cultural sensibilities, and, not least, one's ecclesial commitments. Although clearly related to the task of historical exegesis, the normative theological task involves its own hermeneutical context and problems, best engaged with awareness of one's presuppositions and an irenic spirit in order that the cogency of theological argumentation itself would provide the criterion of persuasion. For many, of course, what would be argued as the normative teaching of Scripture itself would be of preeminent importance. At this level, the Church Fathers, whose theology was perceived not as an addition but explication of recorded revelation, have much to teach interpreters about christological, spiritual, ecclesial, doctrinal, and pastoral considerations in essential continuity with the entire biblical tradition. In cases of major theological disputes, the last hermeneutical word would belong to the community of faith whose voice would prove as convincing as the integrity of its actual witness.

Mystical interpretation, a matter having nothing to do with esoteric techniques, is related to the above approaches, yet is also of a different order. For one thing, it requires no technical preparation but another kind of training, that is,

nurture in the community of faith where even a child can “interpret” the Bible and absorb its life-changing meaning through the hearing and reading of biblical stories. The paramount point here is neither exactitude in historical understanding, nor erudition in conceptual theological knowledge, but the spiritual receptivity of the believer embracing biblical images, symbols, narratives, and teachings, the Holy Spirit itself being the primary interpreter and teacher. Mystical interpretation is the illumination of grace actualizing the biblical witness in human hearts. The risk of subjectivity is countered by the believer’s place in the community, the testing of one’s personal faith and experience against the faith and experience of the community – ultimately the community of the biblical authors, as well as the great teachers and saints of the Church. At this level, a huge amount of powerful interpretation and appropriation of the Bible’s witness occurs in the ordinary stream of the living tradition, which is both conservative and creative, through worship, private devotions, preaching, group Bible studies, and mission activities. These are far more effective for the lives of Christians than the often indigestible results of historical and theological scholarship. Nevertheless, all three approaches to Scripture are indispensable and mutually supportive. No single approach must be allowed to swallow up any other. The ideal would be the greatest possible integration of the three in order that each interpreter at her or his level of scriptural study may grow as scholar and theologian, as well as saint, in the presence of the awesome mystery of the living God encountered through Scripture.

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## **Textual Criticism in the Orthodox Church: Present State and Future Prospects**

IOANNES KARAVIDOPOULOS

A few years ago (1998) biblical researchers and especially those who are occupied with textual criticism celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of the first critical edition of the New Testament by Eberhard Nestle, which has since been the basic text for biblical researchers and for teaching the New Testament in universities throughout the world. In a few months from now another one hundredth anniversary will be reached marking the first and only edition of an approved text of the New Testament in the Orthodox Church, the *Patriarchal Edition* of 1904. In the happy circumstance of these anniversaries and in honoring our teacher Professor Savas Agourides I will briefly take up 1) the editions of the New Testament which were produced during the twentieth century, 2) current research in textual criticism in the Orthodox world, with special emphasis on Greece, and 3) certain thoughts concerning perspectives and needs related to this issue in the Orthodox Church.

### **Twentieth-Century Editions of the New Testament**

Right from the start I must note that no systematic recording of the critical, or even non-critical, twentieth-century editions of the New Testament has been made, either in the Orthodox context, or in an interconfessional context. In other words, nothing equivalent to the work of T.

H. Darlow and H. F. Moule has been produced for the editions of the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, and specifically for the edition of Erasmus (1516) to 1906. The work of Darlow and Moule, entitled *Historical Catalogue of the Printed Editions of the Holy Scripture in the Library of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, vols. 1-4, 1903-1911, contains not only the various editions of the Greek text (or the Hebrew text for the Old Testament), but also all the translations into various contemporary languages of the world through 1906. However, these two researchers recorded with commentary only the editions which are found in the Library of the British Bible Society. Nevertheless, I must add that this is the most appropriate place where one can find all the editions and translations of Holy Scripture gathered together. It is worth noting that this library has now been transferred to a wing of the great University Library of Cambridge in England.

In 1898, the edition of the New Testament by Eberhard Nestle of the Bible Society of Wittenberg summarized the critical research of the nineteenth century. Thus work was echoed in the critical editions of K. Tischendorf (1869-72), Westcott and Hort (1881), and B. Weis (1894-1900), and brought to an end the long domination of the *Textus Receptus*. At the same time, such work turned a new page in the history of publishing which became dominant throughout the entire twentieth century. In spite of the fact that other editions were also produced, however, no one was able to supplant on the international level the universally known edition of Nestle. The work of Nestle has continued, and has maintained its dominance since the publication of the twenty-fifth edition in 1963, under the guidance of Kurt and Barbara Aland. The text is now universally known as "Nestle-Aland." It is with much certitude and self-confidence that Kurt and Barbara Aland have noted that this edition achieved the "withdrawal of the *Textus Receptus* from the church and the schools," and

that “the wheels of history will never again turn backwards.”<sup>1</sup> In making this statement, however, they did not take into account at all the life and use to this very day of the Byzantine text in Orthodox lands and especially in Orthodox worship.

I should add that, along with the Nestle-Aland edition, since 1966 *The Greek New Testament* published by the United Bible Societies has also been published and available. In 1993, the fourth edition of *The Greek New Testament* introduced the variants of the Byzantine Lectionaries. This text has been widely used for biblical research, especially in translations of the New Testament throughout the world. I shall return to this matter shortly.

Although the editions of Nestle-Aland left their seal on the twentieth century, many other editions were also produced, the most important of which are the following. During the early years of the twentieth century, and more specifically between 1902-1913, a very significant four-volume work appeared, entitled *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt hergestellt auf Grund ihrer Textgeschichte* by Hermann von Soden. Aland characterized these volumes, using the words of K. Lake, as “a failure, though a splendid one.”

The English critic S. Legg was able, through his edition *Novum Testamentum Graece secundum Textum Westcotto-Hortianum* (*The Gospel According to Mark*, 1935; *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 1940), to gather material that was accessible to anyone in a much simpler way than that of von Soden. A committee of English and American critics under the name International Greek New Testament Apparatus Project followed up the continuation of Legg’s work. The first product of this committee was the two-volume work, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (1984-1987), which uses the Textus Receptus (1873 edition) as its basis, but which adds a wealth of material from patristic citations of the texts of the New Testament, although the number of manuscripts



used is limited.

It is worth mentioning at this point that at the end of the twentieth century there is a revived interest, especially in America, in the Byzantine text. Thus, we have the appearance of *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, by Zane Hodges and Arthur Farstad (1985, 2nd ed.), and the foundation of the Majority Text Society in Dallas, a society for the promotion of the Byzantine text found in the majority of manuscripts. This text is largely based on the edition of von Soden, and differs from Textus Receptus at 1800 points. Furthermore, according to Daniel Wallace it differs in 6600 points from the third edition of the United Bible Societies' *The Greek New Testament*,<sup>2</sup> while the Alands observe that "this text constitutes an anachronism from every point of view."<sup>3</sup> Similar to the above is *The New Testament in the Original Greek, According to the Byzantine Majority Textform*, by Maurice Robinson (Atlanta: Original Word Publishers, 1991).

The characteristics of all the above editions, as well as of all the critical editions of the twentieth century are as follows:

1. The "eclectic" character of their text, i.e., the fact that their text is a mixture and a combination, or the comparative result, so to speak, of manuscripts and of the types of text. Thus, they provide a text, which does not echo the specific liturgical tradition of any particular church, because the selected scripture can be derived from different manuscripts and not be the same in all the editions;

2. According to the criticism that has been advanced by specialists, the text of these editions is either based on that of Westcott and Hort (1881) – an observation which is particularly applicable to the text of Nestle-Aland and the Alands' *The Greek New Testament* (in spite of their protests to the contrary) – or on the Textus Receptus, which is corrected and transformed in a variety of ways;

3. In the most prominent of these editions, there is, according to the selection of a final text, a clear preference for the Alexandrian type of text and a devaluation of the Byzantine type, in spite of the fact that in the United Bible Societies' *The Greek New Testament* (4th edition) the presence of the Byzantine text in the critical commentary is obvious through the consistent use and citation of lectionaries.

In spite of all the achievements of the twentieth century and the announcement of great programs of long duration, this century has not managed to present any impressive works comparable to that of Tischendorf in the nineteenth century. This is due: a) to the fact that from the middle of the nineteenth century to the present critics had to master a huge amount of material with its problems and deviations (e.g., about one hundred papyri in contrast to the one of Tischendorf); and b) to the fact that no new theory was established concerning the history of the text which would be acceptable to textual critics. We are therefore in the period of an interlude between the great achievements of the nineteenth century and an expected new theory. Or, according to another estimation, we could characterize our epoch as a new "fruitful and transient condition."<sup>4</sup>

### Current Orthodox Textual Research

In the Orthodox context the twentieth century began with an important edition of the New Testament in the year 1904. This edition was not critical, but it did become dominant in the Greek speaking world. It is the so-called *Patriarchal Edition*, known to the circles of the specialists as the patriarchal text or as the Antoniadis text. There is an ample bibliography on this edition.<sup>5</sup> The volume, entitled *The New Testament, Authorized by the Great Church of Christ*, was reprinted with certain corrections by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1907 and in 1912, and continues to be re-

printed to this day by the Apostolike Diakonia and the Christian Brotherhoods in Greece. No provision, however, has been made, as it ought to have been, to harmonize all these editions to one another in all their particulars and especially to harmonize the liturgical readings of the Apostolike Diakonia with the *Patriarchal Edition* text. Conventional technique involves instead the reprinting of older readings of the Venice editions.

I offer this point in order to pose at the outset this question: Why, beyond certain isolated cases, in the Orthodox context, and especially the Greek, has there been no academic interest for any critical examination of the text of the New Testament, whereas other branches of biblical research have attracted and continue to attract the interest of scholars? A brief glance at Greek academic production during the twentieth century exposes the neglect suffered by the branch of biblical research that goes by the name "textual criticism of the New Testament." If we search for the causes, we shall find among them the following:

Textual criticism is an area fraught with great difficulties and complications. E. S. Colwell, who worked in this area and especially with Byzantine lectionaries for thirty years at the University of Chicago, has put it in the following characteristic way: "The scholar who occupies himself today with the textual criticism of the New Testament resembles a traveler to a far country where all the signs of the streets and the other signposts are made of clay and the weather consists of torrential rains. Thus, the old maps and guides are useless, because the signs recorded in them have either disappeared or changed."<sup>6</sup> This characteristic image continues to be cited by contemporary critical scholars. In addition, it may happen that a scholar dedicates most of the decades of his life to the critical restoration of the biblical text and concludes, according to the judgment of other specialists, with an academic Waterloo.

This last point underlines the priority of biblical interpretation and theology vis-à-vis textual criticism. Since the Second World War, Greece has been faced with many needs which theologians and biblical experts had to meet straight away, in order to provide answers established on sound biblical principles to the existential questions posed by the faithful. Thus, the development of hermeneutical theology was given an obvious priority over the minute occupation with the critical problems of the biblical texts in various manuscripts and editions. The interpreters, however, did not seem to understand the link between textual criticism and interpretation, which is enriched by the study of the particular variants of the manuscripts, the understanding of their origins and the historical and ecclesiastical environments within which they emerged.

A special factor that makes many scholars hesitant in dealing with issues relating to textual criticism is the coexistence of two texts of the New Testament in the Greek world: on the one hand, the critical editions used in the academic world (either that of Nestle-Aland, or the Alands' *The Greek New Testament*) and, on the other hand, the *Patriarchal Edition* of 1904 (with its reprints by the Apostolike Diakonia) used in the liturgy and in the daily study of the believers. Ignorance of what is a critical edition of the New Testament has led certain people, theologians included, to characterize the critical editions as "Protestant" texts, being oblivious to the fact that these texts are based on the ancient manuscripts and that these manuscripts constitute a treasure of the Church and, indeed, of the undivided Church of the first centuries.

Let me also add an additional contemporary shortcoming. It is often forgotten that in previous eras in the life of the Church the text of the Scriptures was not neglected as it is in our time. The labors of the presbyter and martyr Lucian in Antioch in the fourth century, the copying of the manuscripts in the scriptoria of the monasteries, the creation of careful

miniatures, and the edition of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the beginning of the twentieth century (1904) all indicate the Church's interest in the text of the Scriptures and the care taken to preserve it.

At this point I wish to add some thoughts on 1) the generally neglected contribution of the Byzantine text in the critical reconstruction of the text of the New Testament and 2) the active participation of the Orthodox in the United Bible Societies' critical edition of *The Greek New Testament* (4th edition).

*The Contribution of the Ecclesiastical Text to the Reconstruction of the Original Text.*

The *a priori* discarding of a text type as secondary, on the basis of a theory, even though it has held sway for a century or more, has undesirable consequences. In the first place, the discarded text may contain readings which are unquestionably original according to the internationally prevailing principles of textual criticism. The English pioneers of textual criticism Westcott and Hort, even though they considered the "Western text" secondary, accepted as correct and original the so-called "Western non-interpolations" namely those readings in which the Western text is shorter than the other text types, contrary to its usual tendency to extend and add. These shorter readings received serious attention in the reconstruction of the text.

Something similar occurs also with the ecclesiastical text, in which there are some readings characteristically shorter than those of the other text types; this suggests that they are probably the original readings and that the longer readings of the other text types are secondary. We could call them "Eastern non-interpolations" and consider them as basic for the reconstruction of the New Testament text. These shorter readings have not yet received any attention from modern ed-

itors of the New Testament. Some of these shorter Byzantine readings may be mentioned as examples.<sup>7</sup>

Mark 3:13-14: Καὶ ἀναβαίνει εἰς τὸ ὄρος καὶ προσκαλεῖται οὓς ἤθελεν αὐτός, καὶ ἀπῆλθον πρὸς αὐτόν. Καὶ ἐποίησεν δώδεκα οὓς καὶ ἀποστόλους ὠνόμασεν ἵνα ὥσιν μετ' αὐτοῦ.

The phrase οὓς καὶ ἀποστόλους ὠνόμασεν, read by the manuscripts Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Θ, f<sup>13</sup> and also in some ancient translations (the marginal reading in the Harklean Syriac; Sahidic and Bohairic Coptic), is omitted by A, C<sup>2</sup> (D ἵνα ὥσιν δώδεκα), K, L, P, f<sup>1</sup>, 33, 565, 892, 1009, 1010, 1071, 1079, 1216, 1230, 1241, 1242, 1253, 1344, 1365, 1546, 1646, 2148, 2174, the Byzantine lectionaries, many manuscripts of the Vetus Latina, the Vulgate, and by the more important Syriac translations, the Gothic, Armenian, Georgian, and the Diatessaron. It is possible that in the manuscripts which have the additional words, we can see the influence of Luke 6:13, whereas no one can explain its omission from the other manuscripts and from the ancient translations. While the twenty-fifth edition of Nestle-Aland considers this phrase in its critical apparatus as having been inserted from Luke 6:13, the twenty-sixth edition introduces it into the text, but in brackets, and the twenty-seventh edition maintains the same. The inclusion of the phrase within brackets by the editors of the United Bible Societies' *The Greek New Testament*, (4th edition), is an indication of its uncertainty, as is its "C" rating, denoting a great degree of doubt as to whether the original reading of the verse is preserved by those manuscripts which do not contain this phrase.<sup>8</sup> Consequently we have a characteristic case of a short Byzantine text which should have been preferred by the critical editors.

Mark 3:16 reads: Καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς δώδεκα καὶ ἐπέθηκεν ὄνομα τῷ Σίμωνι Πέτρον...

The phrase καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς δώδεκα is omitted from the same manuscripts that omit the phrase from Mark 3:14,

and is contained in almost all of those which also contain the other (additionally, Δ and 565). In this case, too, the placing of the phrase in brackets in the above-mentioned critical editions, and the “C” rating in the United Bible Societies’ *The Greek New Testament* (4th edition) testify clearly to the hesitation of the editors. It is very possible that this phrase came from a copying of verse 14, that is, by dittography.

Mark 3:32: Καὶ ἐκάθητο περὶ αὐτὸν ὄχλος, καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ. ἰδοὺ ἡ μήτηρ σου καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί σου καὶ αἱ ἀδελφαί σου ἔξω ζητοῦσίν σε.

The phrase καὶ αἱ ἀδελφαί σου is present in manuscripts A, D, 700, 1010, 1216, 1230, 1253, 1344, in a few Byzantine lectionaries, in Gothic translation, and in the margin of the Harclean Syriac, while it is missing from Sin, B, C, K, L, W, Δ, Θ, Π, 074, f<sup>1</sup>, f<sup>13</sup>, most Byzantine lectionaries, the Vulgate, and from many other ancient translations. The two critical editions place it in brackets, and in the United Bible Societies’ *The Greek New Testament* (4th edition) it occurs with a “C” rating. The members of the editorial committee of the latter consider it possible that the phrase existed and was omitted either by chance (the eye of the copyist went from the first “σου” to the second) or on purpose, because the sisters of Jesus are not mentioned either in verse 31 and 34 or in the parallel passages Matthew 12:47 and Luke 8:20. The personal opinion of Bruce Metzger, a member of the committee and the author of *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (1994, p. 70), is that the shorter text should be adopted, because it is also historically improbable that the sisters of Jesus appeared publicly to call him home. I agree with Metzger’s assessment.

Luke 20:1: Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν μιᾷ τῶν ἡμερῶν διδάσκοντος αὐτοῦ τὸν λαὸν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ καὶ εὐαγγελιζομένου ἐπέστησαν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς σὺν τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις καὶ εἶπαν λέγοντες πρὸς αὐτόν...

Instead of the *οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς* of Sin, B, C, D, L, N, Q, R, Θ, Ψ, f<sup>1</sup>, f<sup>13</sup>, and others, the manuscripts A, E, G, H, K, S, U, V, W, Γ, Δ, Λ, Π, and many cursives have *ιερεῖς*, as do the critical editions of Tischendorf and von Soden. Given that the phrase “chief priests and scribes” corresponds exactly to the gospels, it is impossible that *ἀρχιερεῖς* was corrected to *ιερεῖς*, and much more probable that the opposite occurred. In other words, “it would have been an incomprehensible marvel had *ιερεῖς* been corrected instead of *ἀρχιερεῖς*,” as H. Greeven observes.<sup>9</sup> In this case also, the shorter Byzantine reading should probably be adopted as the original.

The existence of these and many other additional short readings in the ecclesiastical text places some doubt on the certainty with which this text type is generally disregarded *en bloc* by modern critics, and considered as inferior as far as contributing to the reconstruction of the New Testament text is concerned. The twentieth century has inherited from the nineteenth century the excessive confidence of the critics about the secondary value of the ecclesiastical text. However, is the view of Westcott and Hort on the value of the ecclesiastical text definitive, irrevocable and infallible, to the point that the twentieth century has added no new argument, which might modify this opinion? Quite rightly the American professor E. J. Epp, in a most penetrating article, characterizes the state of the discipline of textual criticism in the twentieth century as an “interlude” between the progress of the nineteenth century and an awaited future era.<sup>10</sup>

None of this means uncritical acceptance of the ecclesiastical text as a substitute for today’s prevailing “critical text”. However, it can lead the critical editors to adopt some short readings of the ecclesiastical text (such as those mentioned above), which, with modern scholarly criteria and generally prevailing principles, have a right to be considered as original readings, from which the extended readings of the other text types later derived.



*The Contribution of Orthodox Researchers*

We turn now to the *Patriarchal Edition*,<sup>11</sup> of the Greek New Testament which was prepared at the beginning of our century by the Orthodox Church and which is based entirely upon the lectionaries. In the prologue to the *Patriarchal Edition*, the editorial committee cites one hundred sixteen manuscripts of Gospels and Epistles which represent the reading text for churches from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries. These manuscripts thus cover a span of nearly eight centuries, although the greater number of the more useful manuscripts come from the tenth through the fourteenth centuries. The *Patriarchal Edition* of 1904 constitutes the most serious attempt at a critical elaboration of the text of the New Testament by the Orthodox Church. The English text critic K. Lake, in particular, suggested that this *Patriarchal Edition* be recognized as a more precise representation of the Byzantine Text than that of the Textus Receptus. His proposal was not, however, accepted by his peers, perhaps for the following reasons: (a) the manuscript basis of the *Patriarchal Edition* is not very broad; (b) in certain passages, as V. Antoniadis notes in the prologue, non-Byzantine Text readings were preferred; and (c) the edition was based almost exclusively on lectionaries and not on manuscripts of continuous text of the New Testament which do not agree exactly in many details with the text of the lectionaries.<sup>12</sup>

In any case, the *Patriarchal Edition* constitutes the only edition of the Greek text of the New Testament in the Orthodox world. Since almost a century has passed since its inception, there is a justifiable reason for a new critical edition of the ecclesiastical text of the New Testament, an edition which (a) is based on a broader number of Byzantine manuscripts; (b) makes use of New Testament citations in the writings of the Church Fathers; and (c) is carried out in collaboration with specialists in this area.

It is the responsibility of Orthodox scholars to subject the liturgical text of their Church to a contemporary critical examination, which, naturally, follows the general prevailing principles of textual criticism. Within this framework, one can place my own collaboration with the United Bible Societies in the preparation of the fourth edition of *The Greek New Testament*, which has been published recently.<sup>13</sup> This text coincides with the text of the twenty-seventh edition of Nestle-Aland, with, however, a different critical apparatus that contains textual variants for some 1438 passages.

In connection with the publication of the fourth edition of the United Bible Societies' *The Greek New Testament*, a group of scholars from the University of Thessaloniki undertook the preparation of certain variants of the Byzantine lectionaries. Obviously, it was impossible to take into account all of the extant 2403 Byzantine lectionaries. Rather, a representative selection was made in collaboration with the Institute for the Research of the Text of the New Testament at the University of Münster. The guiding principle in choosing the manuscripts was the desire to utilize representative manuscripts from the eighth to the sixteenth centuries, as well as the different textual types. Thus, manuscripts were chosen which contain the usual Byzantine text, others which often deviate from it and the others which remain close to the Byzantine text. Still, the editorial committee decided it was also necessary to have represented the text of the *Patriarchal Edition* used today in the Greek Church, which, as I have already indicated, is based on the Byzantine lectionaries.

Following the above criteria the Thessaloniki group chose thirty manuscripts of Gospel lectionaries and forty manuscripts of the Epistle lectionaries, which are cited regularly in the critical apparatus. The work of collating the manuscripts was carried out in Thessaloniki over a span of four years while the compilation of the critical apparatus was done at Münster, at a later date. Therefore, the fourth edition

of *The Greek New Testament* has a more complete critical apparatus within which is represented the liturgical text of the Orthodox Church in the original Greek.

### Concern and Goals

Pointing out the shortcomings of a certain area in academic research means becoming aware of the need to deal with these shortcomings. The needs for the future of textual criticism in the Orthodox context are, in my opinion, as follows:

1. The serious academic study of the various forms of the text that have been preserved in our ecclesiastical tradition. The depreciation of other types of text (Alexandrian, Western, and so forth) in the name of the Byzantine text of the Scriptures, which is the operational text of the Church and is known to many believers by heart because of its liturgical repetition in church worship, indicates prejudice and ignorance. The opposite is also the case, however: the depreciation of the Byzantine text by foreign scholars and the preference of another text or set of texts also demonstrates ignorance and prejudice. In other cases the projection of a scriptural eclecticism treats unjustly the living use of the Byzantine text in the liturgical life of the Church. In scientific research ignorance, prejudice, and eclecticism are unjustified.

2. There is an urgent need for the establishment of an institute for the study of the texts of the New Testament. The mandate for such an institution would include gathering manuscripts and attracting young scholars, with the view to preparing a critical edition of the Byzantine text, so that the critical study of the several types of texts may be pursued on the basis of scientific criteria and not by the recitation of slogans or anathemas.

3. In Greece there are three types of editions of liturgical

lessons from the New Testament that are used for the needs of the parish churches: the large size (0,24 x 0,33), the middle size (0,14 x 0,25) and the small size (0,12 x 0,17). These three editions differ in comparison both to one another and to the *Patriarchal Edition* of 1904, and it is high time that the Church enlisted the services of specialists, including critical scholars and theologians, to harmonize these disharmonies.

The Church has moved from age to age, has encountered heresies, has produced theological doctrine, hymns and works of art. She never neglected, however, the manuscripts which contained "the treasure of the faith." It is inconceivable today that within the growth of all the spheres of theological knowledge, the critical study of the manuscripts can be left aside, and the correct editions of the text of the New Testament can be neglected on the grounds that other theological and hermeneutical questions have primacy.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (trans. E. Rhodes; Peabody, MA: Eerdmans, 1989), 79.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Wallace, "The Majority Text Theory: History, Methods, and Critique," in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research* (ed. Bart Ehrman and Michael William Holmes; Peabody, MA: Eerdmans, 1995), 297-320. See also: Daniel Wallace "Some Second Thoughts of the Majority Text," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146 (1989), 270-290.

<sup>3</sup> Aland and Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, (1989), 25.

<sup>4</sup> As M. Silva wonders.

<sup>5</sup> Apart from the Introductions to the NT, see I. Karavidopoulos, "The Greek Text of the NT in Contemporary Research" (in Greek), in *Festschrift for Professor Emeritus K. D. Kalokyres* (1985), 291-327; cf. I. Karavidopoulos, "L'édition patriarchale du N.T. (1904): Problèmes de textes et de traduction dans le monde Orthodoxe," *Kleronomia* 20 (1988), 195-204.

<sup>6</sup> E.S. Colwell, "The Complex Character of the Later Byzantine Text of the Gospels," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 54 (1935), 211.

<sup>7</sup> For more examples see J. Karavidopoulos, "Lectio brevior potior,"

in Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἑπετηρίδα Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς. Μνήμη Ἰωάννου Ἀναστασίου (Thessaloniki, 1992), 275-299. Cf. I. Karavidopoulos, "Einige Kürzere Lesarten des Kirchlichen NT - Textes," in *Orthodoxes Forum* 4 (1990), 5-7.

<sup>8</sup> B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, (2nd ed.; Stuttgart, 1994), 69.

<sup>9</sup> H. Greeven, "Erwägungen zur Synoptischen Textkritik," *New Testament Studies* 6 (1960), 295.

<sup>10</sup> E. J. Epp, "The Twentieth Century Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (1974), 386-414.

<sup>11</sup> Ἡ Καινὴ Διαθήκη ἐγκρίσει τῆς Μεγάλης τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἐκκλησίας, (Constantinople), 1904.

<sup>12</sup> K. Lake, *The Text of the New Testament*, (6th ed.; 1928), 85.

<sup>13</sup> *The Greek New Testament*, (4th rev. ed., ed. Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, 1993).

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## **The Book of Jeremiah and the Pentateuchal Torah**

PAUL NADIM TARAZI

### **Preamble**

I would like to begin with some basic premises that will help the reader follow my argument. As I have argued extensively elsewhere, I believe that the formal and material basis for scripture and its development lies in the Book of Ezekiel and its message.<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel is the prophet of the scriptural deity as the universal God *elohim* who asserts himself as such by commissioning his messenger for a task in Jerusalem while he is still in Babylon, where the Jerusalemites are exiled and in captivity. Moreover, the authority of Ezekiel, a Jerusalemite priest, lies not in his priestly status but in his function as God's prophet, for Yahweh has no temple in Babylon. Through Ezekiel's prophetic *dabar* (word), and not his priestly *torah* (teaching or law), which would have been linked to the temple,<sup>2</sup> the Jerusalemite Yahweh asserts himself as the universal deity *elohim*, whose domain extends from Babylon into the land where his own people were defeated and their temple – his own temple – laid waste. It is the programmatic anti-temple rhetoric of Ezekiel that we see also in both Jeremiah and the Pentateuch, which is the main focus of my presentation.

This foundational message of Ezekiel was misunderstood or intentionally misconstrued by some of his followers as a call to rebuilding a *new* Jerusalem around a *new* temple edifice.<sup>3</sup> Such was the stand of the Hasmonean dynasty under

whose leadership Judah was 'liberated' from the Seleucid yoke. However, that could not have been Ezekiel's intention. His book is, through and through, constructed in criticism of kingship in Jerusalem, for there it is the Lord himself who is the sole true king. The only references to the earthly king of Judah in Ezekiel present him as being sent into exile, and being put to shame for disobedience to God, the sole true king:

On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was upon him there (1:2-3).

The king mourns, the prince is wrapped in despair, and the hands of the people of the land are palsied by terror. According to their way I will do to them, and according to their own judgments I will judge them; and they shall know that I am the Lord (7:27).

Say now to the rebellious house, Do you not know what these things mean? Tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and took her king and her princes and brought them to him to Babylon.... As I live, says the Lord God, surely in the place where the king [viz. God] made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant with him he broke, in Babylon he shall die (17:12, 16).

The verdict against kingship in Judah is final: no new kings are to be admitted into Jerusalem, even as corpses:

And he said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel for ever. And the house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their harlotry, and by the dead bodies of their kings, by setting their threshold by my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall



between me and them. They have defiled my holy name by their abominations which they have committed, so I have consumed them in my anger. Now let them put away their idolatry and the dead bodies of their kings far from me, and I will dwell in their midst for ever (43:7-9).

The reason behind the anti-king stance is that only God is king and he himself shall rule, as shepherd of his people, through his eschatological non-dynastic shepherd:

As I live, says the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out, I will be king<sup>4</sup> over you (20:33).

“I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God” (34:15),

...and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms... My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes. (37:22, 24)

Moreover, not only are the kings of Jerusalem banned from God's new abode described in Ezekiel 40-48, but also the name of Jerusalem itself does not appear at all in these chapters.<sup>5</sup> Since God is essentially a shepherd, his new abode is an open land of pasture, and not a walled city. His 'open' city (Ezek 48:15-48) is wherever he chooses it to be: “And the name of the city henceforth shall be, The Lord is there.” (Ezek 48:35b) This God has forsaken Jerusalem and its temple, and established himself in Chebar, not in a new temple building, but within a written scroll. He is contained within the *dabar* spoken by the *prophet* Ezekiel (chs.1-3). In other words, God's prophet becomes himself God's new residence and is in contradistinction and even opposition to an inimical Jerusalem and Judah, as the Book of Jeremiah clearly confirms:

And I will utter my judgments against them, for all their wickedness in forsaking me; they have burned incense to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands. But you, gird up your loins; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land. They will fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you (1:16-19).

Who, then, would have had cause to misconstrue Ezekiel's message as a call to reestablish the earthly Jerusalem? One such group will have been the mainly Jerusalemite priestly caste, of which Ezekiel himself was part. They could use the building of a new Jerusalem temple to gain ascendancy and hegemony in Judah. A golden opportunity was offered them by the Maccabees, founders of the Hasmonean dynasty whose monarchs also assumed the office of high priesthood. The aristocratic priestly caste gelled into the political party of the Sadducees – Zadokites, “sons of [the Jerusalemite high priest] Zadok.”<sup>6</sup> The ultimate outcome of this movement was a situation that ran counter to Ezekiel's teaching: Judah ended up under the rule of Herod, an Idumean/Edomite king. The irony is that, in Ezekiel, Edom together with Judah and its traditional major allies, Egypt and Tyre, are harshly judged by God, whereas Babylon itself, the suppressor of Judah, is not.

### - Thesis

Those who did understand Ezekiel could not stand by and do nothing. The ‘Jeremian’ school of thought rose and produced an extensive literature in order to correct the misunderstanding of Ezekiel and reinstate his original teaching. Its main product was the Pentateuch or the Book of the *torah*,

which was deliberately placed at the head of the entire scripture: the rest of scripture is thus 'informed' by the Pentateuch. This school's other, parallel, major product was the Book of Jeremiah whose position in the canon before that of Ezekiel is intended to privilege it over the latter and 'inform' its reading. The point to be made in this paper is that the Book of Jeremiah and the Pentateuch are redacted from the same perspective, that they are 'synoptic,' and that the redaction of the two was conceived jointly, such that the Book of Jeremiah is a resume of the Pentateuch, and the Pentateuch is a magisterial elaboration of the point of view represented as being that of the prophet Jeremiah. Put otherwise, the conflicts that led to the composition of the Pentateuch are the same ones elucidated in the Book of Jeremiah. The stand taken in the Book of Jeremiah against the temple and the official clergy opens the door for the Pentateuchal anti-temple and anti-clergy stand. The Torah, which is basically a priestly prerogative,<sup>7</sup> becomes the expression of the word (*dabar*) of the prophet Moses to whom Aaron, the high priest, is subordinated.

Each book conveys its message within a different historical "shell," and the shell in each case serves as a vehicle for the message. The only historical background that matters for understanding the message is what I have laid out above. Since the historical background has been covered in this preamble, what follows will focus strictly on a literary analysis of the common topics in the two texts.

Three points will be elucidated. Firstly, two basic thematic threads underlying both compositions and setting the tone within each will be traced. The second point will be a discussion of the anti-temple polemic in both works, which will be shown to be the immediate *Sitz im Leben* for the composition of both the Book of Jeremiah and the Pentateuch. Lastly, I shall endeavor to show that the convergence in point of view between these two literary productions is reflected also in the literary structure of these two works, thus inviting us to read

them in tandem. The conclusion is that the canonical reading of the Torah and the *nebi'im* (Prophets) in Christianity and Judaism as one literary work is a consequence intended and mandated by the original authors and redactors themselves.

### **The Complex of Anti-Hierarchical, Anti-Dynastic Topics in the Two Works<sup>8</sup>**

The Book of Jeremiah insists that the original seat of the Ark was Shiloh (7:12). This is used as an argument against the exclusivity of Jerusalem in God's design, not to lay a claim for Shiloh. On the other hand, Jeremiah the prophet is presented not as an older person, and consequently one having authority. Quite the contrary, it is underscored that he is a *na'ar* (lad, youth [1:6, 7]), barely to be admitted to public speech. He himself protests to God that he has no facility of speech or stature to address the words of God to the people (1:6).

Similarly, Moses protests at his calling that he is not adept of speech (Exod 4:10). The noun *n'r* used in Jeremiah 1:6, 7 is actually used by the book of Exodus in 2:6 to describe the babe Moses. But beyond identifying Jeremiah with the person of Moses, this identifies Jeremiah with Moses as the representative of the Pentateuch, the Torah as a whole. In Jeremiah 1:5 the prophet is called to be a prophet to the *goyim*, the nations (or the Gentiles). In the Book of Genesis Abram is called to become Abraham, the father of a multitude of nations, *goyim* (17:4-5). In fact, the covenant of God with Abraham is in harmony with the covenant with Noah, the father of all nations. Thus, the scope of the Torah/Pentateuch/Moses is set in the same terms as the task of the prophet Jeremiah, defined in Jeremiah 1:5 ("I appointed you a prophet to the nations") and repeated in 4:2 ("and if you swear, 'As the Lord lives,' in truth, in justice, and in uprightness, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him

shall they glory"). This same terminology is found in the "call of Abraham":

And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth<sup>9</sup> shall bless themselves (Gen 12:2-3).

Beyond the identification of the prophet Jeremiah with the representative of the Pentateuch as a whole, we see the motif of the younger, lesser, socially inappropriate person as God's chosen appear as a leitmotif in the Pentateuch. This is most evident in the Book of Genesis, where God repeatedly chooses the younger, rather than the first born, to establish his storyline.<sup>10</sup>

Alongside the younger, or infant, motif, we see in Jeremiah 1:6-7 the motif of movement from "inside" to "outside." This is present already in 1:5, where a Judean lad is appointed by God as his emissary to the nations at large. The movement is from a single tribe or city to all *goyim*. This is also the keynote motif that starts off the Pentateuch. The single pair Adam and Eve represents all mankind, and the rest of the Pentateuch persistently moves toward that all-inclusive vision after showing how it was lost through the sin of Adam and his descendants. Soon the picture narrows to the single man Abraham through whom eventually all *goyim* – that is, the whole of mankind that was originally represented by Adam and Eve – will be blessed (Gen 12:1-3; 17:4-5). It is this same goal that is invoked at the very beginning of the Book of Exodus, that book about the 'liberation' of Israel from under the yoke of Egypt. Egypt in the Exodus tale represents the *goyim*, yet Joseph, together with Jacob and all his sons, *counted as seventy in number* (1:5; a symbolic number representing all of the *goyim*)<sup>11</sup> face Egypt with a symbolic reminder of God's promise that "all nations" would be

blessed through Abraham.

This openness to the outsider is reflected in the way God's story does not follow the human path of genealogy; it is rather totally free of it. In the Pentateuch, whereas most of the human characters have their heritage elucidated as a sequence of *toledot* (generations), the heritage of God's line – those through whom he implements his will – is strictly one of *debarim* (words).<sup>12</sup> Abraham, in his capacity as receptacle of the promise, is not associated with a list of *toledot* (generations) issuing from him. In continuing the storyline of God, Joseph, the carrier of God's promise, will also have no *toledot* attached to his name either. His two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, will so have, but Joseph's name remains associated with God's storyline, not with a private line. Moses initially does not have a *toledot*, and only in association with his brother Aaron will he acquire one later (Num 3:1). The text makes clear that this combined Moses-Aaron line now is associated with the particular sins of Adam, and thus cannot make it to God's promised land (Num 20:12). The words of Moses, entrusted to Joshua (the *na'ar*, lad, young man, youth, [Exod 33:11], similarly to Jeremiah and Moses) and placed in the ark, where Joseph's bones had been laid, now show the route to God's promise. These words (*debarim*) stand against the generations (*toledot*) of Adam. It is then only in light of a pattern we see in the Pentateuch that we can make sense of God's instruction to Jeremiah not to take a wife and not to have children (Jer 16:1-2). When, after the fall of Jerusalem, he continues to have a private story, it goes against the words he had pronounced and thus against God's will. He ends up in Egypt (the land of bondage) where he was specifically told not to go (Jer 43). In contradistinction, God's story continues in Jeremiah's *words*, which had been entrusted to Baruch and to a scroll (Jer 36:32). The parallelism between is complete.

The same openness of God's plan to outsiders is un-

derscored in the stories of Moses and Jeremiah by bidding God's people to become in effect outsiders themselves. Pharaoh and Egypt function as an enclosure, within which is slavery; to be saved and enjoy freedom is, ironically, to go out to the desert, which otherwise is considered to be the place of death. In a similar vein, the Book of Jeremiah sees Jerusalem as an enclosure. At the height of its siege the rich set free their slaves and then go back on their word when the danger recedes (Jer 34:8-11), much as Pharaoh does when facing Moses.<sup>13</sup> Their recidivism is seen as the final rejection of God's word, sealing their fate and that of Jerusalem, much like Pharaoh's hardness of heart dooms Egypt to experience the plagues. In the text immediately following (Jer 35) the Rechabites, who normally lived a semi-nomadic life outside the city walls, are given as a sign and example to the city whose fate has been sealed. There is also a parallel to the Pentateuch in God's repeated demand that the Jerusalemites accept the Babylonian king's rule.<sup>14</sup> Nebuchadnezzar represents the sword (*hereb*) against Jerusalem,<sup>15</sup> yet in the Book of Jeremiah he is also the servant of God (Jer 43:10). In the Pentateuch, Sinai is often called *Horeb* (different vowels but the same three consonants). Yet, in spite of its being the unforgiving place of death, it is there that Moses enjoins the people to go.

Jeremiah sees as the figs of good hope those who are taken to Babylon (Jer 24). He addresses them in his letter entrusting the future to them:

The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. It said: "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in mar-

riage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. *But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.* For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream, for it is a lie which they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, says the Lord.” (Jer 29:3-9; italics mine).

In the vicinity of the mountain of Sinai, Moses in the Pentateuch marries the Midianite Jethro’s daughter (Exod 3:1), takes the advice of Jethro (Exod 18:13-27), and enjoins Joshua in league with Caleb (along with the outsider Calebites)<sup>16</sup> to work for the future of the promise (Exod 14:1-38; see also 26:65 and 32:12). Jeremiah seems to state that salvation is possible only outside the city. In the Book of Exodus, Moses is expressly told after the apostasy with the golden calf (Exod 32) that if God were to reside in the camp, he would have to destroy the people. Consequently, he sets the tent of meeting outside the camp as the place of encounter between himself and the people (Exod 33:1-11). The saving God of Exodus can only be met outside the encampment, outside the assembly residing within its own walls. His saving face can only be encountered in the inimical turf outside, at the place where Moses met and came into alliance with the outsider Jethro.

Jerusalem is not mentioned by its full name in the Pentateuch. Quite the contrary, every evasive means is taken to avoid by circumlocution any explicit mention of the city. The book of the words (*debarim*), Deuteronomy,<sup>17</sup> has the people feed on the words of the God of Moses in the desert. The actual place of worship is incidental and practically inconsequential. While this teaching is present in the Book of Ezekiel, in Deuteronomy we have it formulated in the same way we see it in Jeremiah. Just as Jeremiah sees Jerusalem



as only one in a series of places where God shows his name (Jer 7:12), the Book of Deuteronomy uses this indefinite formulation to specify and yet avoid naming the place where worship is offered to God's name (Deut 12:5,11). It is in the words and not the place that, according to Deuteronomy, the God of Moses is met, known and worshipped. This brings us to the central issue in the Book of Jeremiah and of this presentation: the question of the temple.

### **The 'Special Theory': The Temple Polemic of the Book of Jeremiah and the Pentateuch**

The Book of Jeremiah has as its cutting edge the polemic against the partisans of the temple ideology. The prophet Hananiah represents most pointedly the opposing point of view. Jeremiah uses the term temple (Hebrew *hekal*, Greek *naos*) in only two places;<sup>18</sup> the word he uses most often to designate the Jerusalem place of worship is simply 'this place' (*hamaqqom hazzeh*).<sup>19</sup> By deliberately avoiding the temple's name, Jeremiah in effect belittles it and verbally consigns it to oblivion. This is precisely what God instructed Jeremiah to do: "See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." (Jer 1:10). The first four tasks in this list are all destructive. The number four is itself an indirect reference to the temple, since, when it is bereft of the title to holiness, what is left is the dubious pretence to command the four corners of the earth from its supposed center of the world.<sup>20</sup> The remaining two tasks of building up bring to mind the number two associated with witnesses.<sup>21</sup> The witness functions by virtue of speech. What stands humanly opposed to the temple is not another temple but the words of witness which the prophet has just been told had been placed in his mouth: "Then the Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, 'Behold, I

have put my words in your mouth” (Jer 1:9). In Jeremiah the temple stands in opposition to God (7:4; 26:6-10), and against it stands God’s word represented by the words of his prophet (1:1-2; 7:28; 26:12-13).

In contrast, the representative of the temple ideology insists that the god of the temple acts, much as Baal does, to protect his reserve. This god protects his own and destroys those who are outside. In temple ideology the inside is *ipso facto* good. The outside is, at least unless amalgamated to the inside, evil. But Jeremiah insists that the God who has called him and called the people is a judging God. The topic of judgment invites a set of topics associated with justice. Opposed to this set of topics is the one favoring the ‘in’-group over the ‘out’-group. This opposing point of view invites the set of topics associated with clean versus unclean, comparing an inner Holy of Holies with progressively more contaminated areas radiating out from the center as one moves further away. The prophet Jeremiah, acting against the temple and in favor of the king of Babylon, is accused not just of blasphemy but of high treason which deserves the sentence of death (Jer 26:11). He has chosen to associate with the outer darkness against the holy insider group whose home is the temple precinct. From Jeremiah’s point of view, they are actually ‘outsiders’ from God’s perspective, and the temple they are residing in is “a den of robbers” (7:11).

This juxtaposition of opposing points of view, presented above very schematically, is the overriding theme behind the redaction and construction of every passage and section in the Pentateuch. It is precisely in the very clearly constructed literary grappling between the two opposing points of view that the identity of authorship and crucible in the redaction of the Book of Jeremiah and the Pentateuchal Torah becomes most evident.

It is best to start with the Book of Leviticus. This book deals with the temple service. Just as, in the Ancient Near

East, the temple stood at the heart of the city, so does Leviticus stand in the middle of the Pentateuch. And just as the Pentateuch, God's Torah rooted in the prophetic teaching, is critical of the priestly torah, so is Leviticus critical of the temple service. We find that, with one exception (Lev 26:46, which I will explain presently), the word *torah* is used exclusively in the first part of the book before chapter 16.<sup>22</sup> The turning point in chapter 16 corresponds to the reconciliation between the wayward people and the deity on the Day of Atonement. The broken covenant is reestablished, and the document announcing this return to grace is the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26) containing the rules that are supposed to secure the state of holiness reestablished at the Day of Atonement. Consequently, the section of Leviticus preceding chapter 16 represents the pre-grace, and thus out-of-grace, situation. Leviticus 1-15 postulates the topic of clean versus unclean during the out-of-grace section, together with the topic *torah*. The statement is made that, even the *torah* of clean versus unclean is established by God through Moses, and not through Aaron and his sons, who stand themselves under the judgment of the *Mosaic torah*. Actually, Aaron and his sons were not around when the *torah* they are bound by was being formulated; it was set up *for* them. Indeed, the temple service is delineated in chs. 1-7, and only thereafter are Aaron and his sons consecrated as temple servers (chs. 8-10). Put otherwise, the entire temple service, which is expressed essentially in terms of clean versus unclean (or in the sacred equivalent, holy versus unholy), and the priesthood assigned to it, both pertain to the out-of-grace situation prior to the Day of Atonement. Both are "according to the word (*dabar*) of Moses" (Lev 10:7), under its judgment whenever this word is contravened.<sup>23</sup> The rubrics for the Day of Atonement provide the springboard for the inauguration of the state of grace, which then unfolds through the text of the Holiness Code. At the conclusion of this code we are

told that this preceding text is what is now to be construed as Torah: "These are the statutes and ordinances and laws which the Lord made between him and the people of Israel on Mount Sinai by Moses" (26:46). The question then is the following: What transformation in meaning or function has this term undergone in the preceding chapters, which warrants casting the term *torah* at this point in the book as a newly defined quantity?

In order to find the answer, one should inquire into the original meaning of the term Torah. In Jer 18:18 we hear that Torah is quintessentially the form of speech used by the priest, just as counsel is the speech of the wise man, and word (*dabar*) is what comes out of the prophet's mouth. Previously in the Book of Jeremiah we are told in that those responsible for the law have not known the God of Jeremiah: "The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?' Those who handle the law did not know me" (2:8). In Jeremiah 6:19 the message is again that the rebellious Jerusalemites have not known God's Torah, 'My Law.' The implication would seem to be that Torah modified by the divine possessive pronoun functions differently from the Torah defined by Jeremiah's contemporaries. This juxtaposition of two conflicting approaches to Torah may well be what underlies the transformation we see in Leviticus. The original meaning of *torah* was the priestly teaching defining the separation of clean/holy from unclean/unholy, and now it is to be transformed into a Torah defined by the 'words' of the prophet Jeremiah. The extent to which this is taken very seriously in the Book of Jeremiah is evident in the eschatological passage 31:31-34:

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though

I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put *my law* within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Rather than a priestly Torah spoken from the temple, God will place his Torah in the heart of each one,<sup>24</sup> much as the Word addressed to, and within the reach of, the addressees of the Book of Deuteronomy:

For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it (Deut 30:11-14).

There is no longer a need for a priest or temple. The reason given in Jeremiah 31:32 is that the initial covenant had been broken the moment the people were brought out of Egypt, and this refers precisely to the end of Exodus as it immediately precedes the Book of Leviticus in the Pentateuch. In Exodus 32 the covenant is broken by Aaron's apostasy, then reestablished in chapter 34. The Book of Leviticus continues the narrative by redefining the reestablished covenant of Exodus 34. So Leviticus and Jeremiah 31:31-34 address one and the same situation, at least from the point of view of the Book of Jeremiah. The climax of the Holiness Code is in Leviticus 25, where we have the Jubilee year culminating in the enfranchisement of those in enslavement. The repeated teaching of the Book of Exodus had been that Yahweh is

the God who frees the enslaved and the oppressed. These are Jeremiah's themes as well. But is this just a matter of Jeremiah adopting Pentateuchal themes, or can we find something in Leviticus that suggests this is, in fact, a two-way street?

There is yet another biblical text that can help answer this question: Trito-Isaiah (Isa 56-66) is the only other literary work that focuses primarily on the topics related to the Jubilee year and the redemption of those in captivity, which is what we find in the Holiness Code. In this respect, Isa 56-66 is a twin text to the Holiness Code, and this text too culminates in condemnation of the temple service:

Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house which you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things are mine, says the Lord. But this is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word. He who slaughters an ox is like him who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like him who breaks a dog's neck; he who presents a cereal offering, like him who offers swine's blood; he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like him who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations; I also will choose affliction for them, and bring their fears upon them; because, when I called, no one answered, when I spoke they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my eyes, and chose that in which I did not delight." Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at his word: "Your brethren who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake have said, 'Let the Lord be glorified, that we may see your joy'; but it is they who shall be put to shame. "Hark, an uproar from the city. A voice from the temple. The voice of the Lord, rendering recompense to his enemies" (Isa 66:1-6).

This harangue against the temple and the teaching about the redemption of the enslaved culminates in pushing to the

limit the criticism of the notion of the clean inside, as opposed to the unclean outside. Indeed, the inversion of the function of the Torah is so complete that the Levites and priests in the eschatological vision will be recruited from the far off islands and Gentiles:

For I know their works and their thoughts, and I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Put, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations. And they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as an offering to the Lord, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord, just as the Israelites bring their cereal offering in a clean vessel to the house of the Lord. And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the Lord (Isa 66:18-21).

In the Pentateuch, the liberation from Pharaoh is followed by the apostasy of worshipping the golden calf, led by Aaron (Exod 32). After that we have the attempt to address the fallen people, starting with Exodus 34 and stretching through the Book of Leviticus. The latter book addresses precisely these questions related to the temple polemic in Jeremiah, by placing the Holiness Code after the chapter about the Day of Atonement (ch.16). This, in effect, crowns the redefining of the Torah in terms of the Jubilee year (ch. 25). As we saw above, the Consolation of Jeremiah (chs. 30-33) sees itself addressed precisely to these redeemed but fallen people within the irreversibly fallen Jerusalem (31:31-34).

The Pentateuch, then, appears to have been written by a group that wished to give precedence to Moses over against a group claiming the authority of being the sons of Aaron (e.g., Eleazar, Pinhas, among others). The latter, in the person of

their representative Aaron, are repeatedly shown to be under the judgment of the words of Moses throughout the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. This situation brings to mind the showdown between Jeremiah and Hananiah, the prophet championing the cause of the Jerusalem temple and its priesthood. An interesting case in point of this anti-temple signature feature of the two literary productions is found in Leviticus 10. This entire chapter revolves around the misconduct of two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, which triggers a series of three divine ordinances to Aaron with the threat of capital punishment ("lest you die"; Lev 10:6-9). However, whereas the first two are delivered through Moses (vv. 6-7), in the third instance God addresses Aaron directly and by himself:<sup>25</sup> "And the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying, 'Drink no wine nor strong drink, you nor your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die; it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations'" (vv. 8-9). This prohibition brings to mind the extended praise of the Rechabites in Jeremiah 35 following the judging words against Jerusalem in the preceding chapter.<sup>26</sup> Not only do these Rechabites, who are given as an example to be followed by "the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (35:13-14), live in "tents," just as God's abode is the "tent of meeting" in Leviticus, but they also abstain from wine, an abstention which is moreover according to an ordinance of their father Jonadab (Jer 35:6-14), whose name is from the same root as Aaron's son, Nadab.<sup>27</sup> Where the latter fails to render the right service to God in the tent of meeting, the Rechabites, sons of Jonadab, succeed in obeying God's order not to drink wine in his temple:

So I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah, and his brothers, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites. I brought them to *the house of the LORD* into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaiah, the man of God, which was near the chamber of the princes,



above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, keeper of the threshold. Then I set before the Rechabites pitchers full of wine, and cups; and I said to them, "Drink wine." But they answered, "We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, 'You shall not drink wine, neither you nor your sons for ever; you shall not build a house; you shall not sow seed; you shall not plant or have a vineyard; but you shall live in tents all your days, that you may live many days in the land where you sojourn' (Jer 35:3-7).

Finally, and most importantly, the anti-temple stance is reflected in the assertion that the true expression of God's will lies in his words (*debarim*) and not in the temple stones or its service. Indeed, just as Jeremiah's legacy is not handed down through the temple constituency, in spite of the fact that he was a priest (Jer 1:1), but rather through the written word,<sup>28</sup> so also the legacy of Moses the Levite (Exod 2:1) is not traced through his own lineage, including his brother Aaron, but is carried on by Joshua, whose only asset – or rather lack thereof – is that he is (just) a *na'ar* whom God chooses as he does Moses (and Jeremiah), on no other basis except his divine will.

### **Redactional Signatures Cross-Referencing the Book of Jeremiah and the Pentateuch**

The work of Jeremiah is introduced as having been initiated in the thirteenth year of Josiah and continued through the reign of Jehoiakim, 'son of Josiah,' until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, 'son of Josiah.' What is interesting is that only Josiah and the 'sons of Josiah' are mentioned, with the result that Josiah's name is mentioned three times in one sentence. Thus, the entire period of Jeremiah's activity is linked to Josiah, the king under whom the book of the Law of Moses was discovered, who repented upon hearing its content, and who had it read to all the people, as Moses

had done in the wilderness.<sup>29</sup> In this regard, it is interesting that in 2 Kings 22:8 the high priest who announces the discovery of the Law of Moses is Hilkiah, which is the name of Jeremiah's father (Jer 1:1).

After Josiah, Jeremiah's work (Jer 1:3) continues under Jehoiakim (a name that means "The Lord has raised or made to stand"), up to the eleventh year of Zedekiah (which means, "the Lord has proven himself righteous"). Thus, the story line of the Book of Jeremiah is as follows: the hope that Moses' Law planted under Josiah was dashed by the sin of Jerusalem's kingship and priesthood, which brought about God's decision to 'raise' an enemy against Judah and then to reveal his righteousness by implementing his verdict against Judah; Jerusalem is to be destroyed and the hope is relegated to the future according to God's promise through Jeremiah's words. The same story line is found in the Pentateuch the last book of which, Deuteronomy, ends with the blessing of the tribes (Deut 33), though there are only eleven at that time. The full blessing, symbolized in the number 'twelve,' still lies in the future. Moreover, it is noteworthy that, in these blessings, Judah and Levi are represented as being in a state of rebellion (Deut 33:7-11), much as Judah is in rebellion at the end of Jeremiah's prophetic activity and priesthood (Jer 42-43).<sup>30</sup>

The book of Deuteronomy ends with Moses on Mount Nebo looking from afar to the promised land. It is on Mount Nebo that Joshua finally receives his commission from Moses. The prophetic activity of Jeremiah ends with Judah and Jerusalem under the hand of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 44).<sup>31</sup> (Notice the correspondence between Nebo and Nebu). Those who would listen to the words of Jeremiah are told to remain in Babylon, not to go to Egypt. Nabu, or Nebo, is the god of writing in the Babylonian pantheon. Thus, the Marduk-like God (*Elohim*) of the creation narrative in the Book of Genesis has been transformed into a

God of the written word at the end of the Pentateuch, a God who delivers a scroll. Similarly, the God of Jeremiah has the prophet deliver a scroll by the hand of Baruch at the end of his work.

The example of God's action against Egypt is thematically essential for the teaching of the Book of Jeremiah, since the book repeatedly warns Judah not to join league with Egypt.<sup>32</sup> The series of oracles against the nations begins with the indictment and condemnation of Egypt, and its defeat at the hand of the Babylonians (Jer 46). If one follows the LXX version, which seems to be the original, then this oracle against Egypt occurs in Jeremiah 26, at the center of the book.<sup>33</sup> This harsh stance against Egypt, with whom Judah sought to ally itself, corresponds with what we find in Exodus 14-15, where Egypt is presented as Israel's mortal enemy, from whose clutches God saves his people. And it is precisely this salvation from Egypt, that becomes the premise for the introduction of the covenant with the God of Sinai in the Pentateuch.

Sinai is the backdrop for the work of God in the Pentateuch. Its root syllable 'Sin' is closely associated with the Babylonian empire, especially since the time of Nabonidus (556-539 B.C.). This Babylonian king moved the capital from Babylon, the city of the god Marduk, to Taiman in (the wilderness of) Northern Arabia, in honor of the deity Sin, the moon god who was deemed ruler of the desert. This link between the saving God of the Pentateuch and Sinai (which means 'my Sin' in Hebrew) against Pharaoh and Egypt, recalls the stand of Jeremiah, who sees Nebuchadnezzar as God's servant and writes to the exiles in Babylon that their future and welfare is inextricably entwined with that of the Babylonians.

The judging character of the God of the Exodus is written in every passage in the Pentateuch. He does not uphold wrongdoers simply because they are members of a particular group, even if he himself calls them his people. This is the

teaching of Jeremiah. In the Pentateuch, before and after the apostasy with the golden calf, God calls himself *Hannoun* (Exod 22:26; 34:6), a name that appears nowhere else and has the same consonants as the name of Jeremiah's opponent Hananiah (the Lord has mercy).<sup>34</sup>

Here the name brackets the passage about the establishing of the covenant (Exod 19-31), its breaking (Exod 32:1-10), the annihilating judgment that follows (Exod 32:25-29), and finally the reestablishing of the covenant (Exod 34). This view picks up the refrain of Jeremiah's arch-opponent, the assertion that God is kind and gracious, and applies it to Jeremiah's word of God's annihilating judgment. God's true mercy lies in his care for his people, expressed through his corrective instruction (*torah*) when they go astray, in order to lead them to his safe haven.

### **The Inversion of the Notion of Torah: Some Conclusions**

I indicated earlier that, in the Book of Leviticus, the word *torah* occurs exclusively between chapters 6 and 15, with one exception in 26:46, which comes at the end of the Deuteronomic-Jeremian chapter. This chapter, together with the preceding chapters of the Holiness Code culminating in the Jubilee, redefines what is now to be understood by the word *torah* or its plural *torot*. The result of this redefinition in the Pentateuch and Jeremiah is what we will investigate now, because it is also this word which came to designate the five books of Moses in their entirety.

The clue to this redefinition is to be found in Jeremiah 15:1, a verse that recalls Ezekiel 14:

Then the Lord said to me, "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go"(Jer 15:1).

...even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, says the Lord God... (Ezek 14:14, repeated in v.20).

What is different in Jeremiah 15:1 is that in the place of Noah, Daniel, and Job as rejected intercessors, we have Moses and Samuel, and even Jeremiah himself as the rejected intercessors. What has developed here between Ezekiel's and Jeremiah's time is a canon of writings, conceived and written to replace the mythological traditions of the Ancient Near East. The three, Moses (the Pentateuch/Torah), Samuel (the Former Prophets), and Jeremiah (the Latter Prophets), are variations on one theme and are meant to take the place of the priestly Torah and its supporters, the false prophets who speak their own mind and not God's, unlike Ezekiel and Jeremiah.<sup>35</sup> Just as Noah, Daniel, and Job are the personifications of wisdom in the traditions of the Ancient Near East, so are Moses, Samuel, and Jeremiah among the followers of the God of Exodus. His Torah is not anymore the prerogative of the temple servers who adulterated it, but is rather linked to the word (*dabar*) of his chosen mouthpieces, the 'prophets' Moses, Samuel, and Jeremiah:

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren – him you shall heed.... I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him (Deut 18:15, 18).

This redefined Torah is entrusted to the priests and binding on the king:

And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, from that which is in the charge of the Levitical priests; and it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, by keeping all

the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them (17:18-19).

Overlooking this fundamental feature of scriptural redefinition of the concept of Torah has led many commentators throughout the centuries to pit Jeremiah against Moses, and the Prophets against the Torah, understood as the Pentateuch. But if the books of the Pentateuch (the Torah) and the Prophets, and the figures of Moses and Jeremiah, were all produced in the same crucible, then a different reading of the Pentateuch as Torah is called for. The following are some pointers for such a rereading of the Pentateuchal Torah.

'Torah' fundamentally refers to a system which is a "clean, safe, uncontaminated, inside domain" as opposed to the "unclean, mortally dangerous, contaminated, outside domain." Consequently it is normally organized in terms of a central shrine and power brokerage system. This image of Torah is inverted, converted, and redefined in the corpus of the Pentateuch and the Former and Latter Prophets, and it becomes totally subordinated to the *debarim* (words) defined in the book of the prophet Jeremiah. The system of "inside good, outside evil" no longer holds. The beast in the Book of Jeremiah resides in the temple; God is in the wilderness, in the place of the sword (*hereb* in Jeremiah, *Horeb* in the Pentateuch), in the land of the enemy. In the Pentateuch, after the redemption from Pharaoh, the worst beast is encountered in the assembly of those previously redeemed people who gathered around the golden calf, proclaiming it as "your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt" (Exod 32:4). This constitutes the problem to be dealt with across all five books of the Pentateuch.

The word (*dabar*), which functions by virtue of its being openly spoken and not bound to a central authority as the Torah is, is a feature of the common marketplace. Now, in scripture, this same word defines the action of the Pentateuchal God, who is no longer bound to either dynas-

tic kinship or priesthood. In Genesis, genealogies (*toledot*), endless names defining 'blue blood' as opposed to commoners, become a sign of the sins of Adam. In Exodus, the exodus deity gathers a motley group of former slaves to establish his assembly. The result is that, instead of arid lists of names, the wilderness sprouts with words. From the Book of Exodus, called *shemot* (names) in Hebrew, to the book of Deuteronomy, called *debarim* (words) in Hebrew, the matrix of the noun Torah is redefined by the matrix of the noun *da-bar*. The Book of Deuteronomy is a series of didactic texts supplanting the matrix of the term Torah and replacing it with the matrix of the term *dabar*.

The word breaches the wall of the sanctuary of the marketplace. From the marketplace, it breaches the walls of the city and becomes a *vade mecum* that can be carried around in the outer wilderness, unlike the torah that is bound to a temple. The land of the enemy becomes the sanctuary of the deity. Scripture is born, and the sanctuary, or shrine, becomes an institution in its death throes. In the Book of Jeremiah, it is in the land of the enemy that the people's welfare and future can take root. The Pentateuch picks up on this, and Sinai, God's primordial location, recalls Babylon, the land of the god Sin. When his city Jerusalem fails, the Pentateuchal Deity declares that he can make his new city out of Sinai, an allusion to Babylon, or 'his [my] Babylon':

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare (Jer 29:4-7).

This stand is powerfully carried into the Torah and the

Former Prophets. The only leader besides Joshua who straddles both these literatures is Caleb. He is, according to Moses' instruction, the close associate of Joshua in the promised land as well as in the wilderness on the way to Canaan. He is a foreigner, a Kenizzite (Num 32:12; Josh 14:6, 14), and yet the Book of Judges credits him and his clan with the achievements of the golden age preceding the fall which is covered by the period of the judges (Judg 1:9-20). Furthermore, in Judges 3:9, we hear that the first saving judge is Othniel, a brother of Caleb. To top all that, Caleb's name in Hebrew means "dog," which, together with the pig, is the most abject animal in scriptural literature (Isa 66:3; Matt 7:6; Rev 22:15).

The gargantuan struggle for the legacy of the prophet Ezekiel was won by the Jeremian party through the corpus of literature it created, the Pentateuchal Torah and the Prophets. The literature it created was against the *hekal* party, whether the *hekal* is construed as the temple or the palace. It is intrinsically wrong to tie this literature in any way to official temple or state circles. It was written in the style of the storyteller and folk literature. The use of formal palace forms is done as a caricature in the way of the folk storyteller. The life situation of such literature moves with the itinerant teller, much as the wilderness tent of its deity, and the prophets who pronounce its content. It is a *vade mecum*, a manual for the road. It cannot be a book of a temple nor of a palace. Its victory meant that attempts to highjack Ezekiel, which is not a book *of* the temple or palace, into a book *for* the temple or palace, would never succeed. What brings down this attempt every time is that the very topic which led to its redaction was precisely the refusal to allow such a reception. Its very fabric militates against and thwarts every attempt to make it subject to any and every other golden calf, Baal, or Jupiter. The Pentateuchal Torah is the Jeremian Torah, it is a Jeremiad on every kind of establishment at and in all times.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Paul Nadim Tarazi, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, Vol. 1, *Historical Traditions*, new revised edition (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 15-41.

<sup>2</sup> Jer 2:8; 18:18; Ezek 7:26; 22:26; 43:12.

<sup>3</sup> The effort culminated in the building of the Herodian temple.

<sup>4</sup> In the original Hebrew it is the verb *malak* (to rule, or perform the kingly office) that is used.

<sup>5</sup> See below on the striking absence of the mention of Jerusalem by name in Deuteronomy.

<sup>6</sup> The Hebrew root *zdq* reflects the righteousness according to the Law/torah, which was essentially the temple ordinance and thus a priestly prerogative (see, e.g., Deut 17:18-20; 2 Kgs 22:28; Ezek 7:26; 22:26; Hos 4:6).

<sup>7</sup> See above, n. 6.

<sup>8</sup> This is the 'general theory' behind the work. In the following section the 'special theory' of the author occasioning the redaction of the work will be elaborated.

<sup>9</sup> An older tribal terminology corresponding to the term 'nations.'

<sup>10</sup> e.g., Abel, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses.

<sup>11</sup> The list of the sons of Noah after the deluge in Gen 10:2-31 and consequently of the nations issuing from them is seventy in the MT (in the LXX it is seventy two). The sons of Jacob in Genesis normally have an issue of twelve sons, but when the count is made of this issue reaching Egypt, it is seventy in Gen 46:27, Exod 1:5, and Deut 10:22. When Egypt mourns for Jacob, they mourn for seventy days, Gen 50:3. The numerical visage Jacob assumes addressing the nations/Egypt is seventy. This count does not include Jacob and Joseph. Adding them would make the number seventy two. If we take Num 11:16 together with 11:24-30 seriously we would have Moses with seventy elders with the gift of prophesy outside the camp, addressing the *orbis*, while the two prophets in the camp address the *urbis*. This would explain both the textual variations in Genesis between the MT and the LXX, as well as the variation in the textual witnesses to Luke 10:1. The question of the number seventy is usually discussed at length in commentaries on Luke. A very good resume is found in J. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV* (New York: Doubleday & Co, 1985), 845-846.

<sup>12</sup> The wordplay in Hebrew is pregnant: the Hebrew *toledot*, which is usually translated as "generations, genealogy," has the meaning of "story," since the *toledot* of someone is usually the title of, or introduction to,

the passage talking about that person's story.

<sup>13</sup> Exod 7:13, 22; 8:11, 15, 28; 9:7, 12, 35; 10:20, 27; 11:10.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Jer 27:6-8; 29:3-9.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Jer 29:17-18 and 32:24, 36. The Book of Jeremiah is second only to that of Ezekiel in the number of times this trilateral is employed (91 times in Jer, versus 116 in Ezek).

<sup>16</sup> See below.

<sup>17</sup> The Jewish tradition refers to the Pentateuchal books by the first word/words of each book. Deuteronomy starts with "These are the words (*had-debarim*) that Moses spoke..."

<sup>18</sup> In 7:4 (twice) and 24:1. Two other mentions of the temple in the Hebrew text of Jeremiah (HEB 50:28 [LXX 27:28] and HEB 51:11 [LXX 28:11]) are not found in the Greek, and are manifestly additions to the text, either on the part of the group responsible for the rearrangement we find in the Hebrew text, or scribal intercalations which crept into the text, representing the point of view of those scribes.

<sup>19</sup> Jer 19:1-15; 27:21-28:6.

<sup>20</sup> Pictorially this is most graphically represented in Ezek 47-48.

<sup>21</sup> Deut 17:6; 19:15.

<sup>22</sup> Lev 6:2, 7, 18; 7:1, 7, 11, 37; 11:46; 12:7; 13:59; 14:2, 32, 54, 57; 15:32; 26:46. The term 'law' found in RSV at Lev 24:22 translates the Hebrew *mishpat*, not torah. The plural *torot* does appear in 26:46, but the usage is quite different besides the fact that its other occurrences are all in the singular. In Lev 26 the word appears in a formulary summation at the end of the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26), where it is one in a list of three parallel terms: "These are the statutes (*huqqim*) and ordinances (*mishpatim*) and laws (*torot*) which the Lord made between him and the people of Israel on Mount Sinai by Moses." I believe that this construct is intended to point out that torah underwent a shift in function between the pre- and the post-Day of Atonement sections.

<sup>23</sup> Actually this chapter 10, which concludes the section on the investiture of the priests (chs. 8-10) and which contains judgmental utterances against them, is densely loaded with the root *dabar* both in the verbal and nominal forms: *dibber yahweh* (v. 3), *kidbar mosheh* (v. 6, 7, 8, 11, 12), and others.

<sup>24</sup> See also the parallel teaching in Ezekiel: "And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God" (7:19-20); "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel?"

<sup>25</sup> This is a unique instance in Leviticus since otherwise, when Aaron is the addressee, it is either Moses who speaks to him or it is God who speaks to Moses and him.

<sup>26</sup> These two chapters form a unit between the Book of Consolation (Jer 30-33) and the lengthy section on Jeremiah himself (Jer 36-45)

<sup>27</sup> The connection is even more striking when one considers that the first part of the name Jonadab is YW, YHW respectively, which is a shortened form of the divine tetragrammaton *YHWH*. Given that the name of Aaron's other son Abihu ["He is my father," or "My father is he"] is a theophoric name, then Jonadab would function at the same time the counterpart of Nadab and Abihu.

<sup>28</sup> His legacy is passed on by Baruch the scribe (Jer 36:32), i.e., someone committed to the "word" like Jeremiah himself.

<sup>29</sup> He starts his activity in the thirteenth year of Josiah, the first year after the coming of age of a person. Josiah will be handed the "rediscovered" law of Moses in his eighteenth year, giving Jeremiah five years to complete the fivefold work of the Pentateuch. Josiah, in 2 Kings 22-23, is said to be killed in his 31st year. This makes his death in the thirteenth year after the discovery of the Law of Moses, making him reach the full age of instruction in the Torah before his martyrdom. This is his 31st year in office, making it also equivalent to the first year after reaching full maturity for assuming fully the reins of regnal power, the age David assumes the throne. In Josiah's case it is in fact 30 years after he takes office as an infant. The significant dates of Josiah are calculated in terms of Jeremiah's ministry and his own throne tenure, not his birth. Jeremiah begins to work when Josiah comes of age, on the throne, to receive a 'master course.' Actually, Josiah takes the throne at the age of eight, eight being symbolic of circumcision on the eighth day. His assumption of the throne is in fact that of every babe circumcised into the community of the Law. His messianic enthronement is in fact in his martyrdom standing to and by the Jeremian sermon. Thus, in the book of 2 Kings, Josiah reaches both didactic maturity in the Torah, and messianic maturity immediately before he goes on to refuse the overtures of the king of Egypt, and to die a martyr's death standing in his way. This is the Jeremian sermon. Josiah is made to be the only person in Jerusalem to carry out the Jeremian charge. This charge is understood to be the Law of Moses.

<sup>30</sup> In the LXX version, which I deem to be the original, these chapters are at the end of the Book of Jeremiah (chs. 49-51). The same situation obtains at the end of the scroll of the Twelve Prophets (Mal 2:1-12). See further on this matter Paul Nadim Tarazi, *op.cit.*, 59-62.

<sup>31</sup> In the LXX it is ch. 51, virtually the end of the Book of Jeremiah.

<sup>32</sup> Jer 2:18, 36; 24:8; 37:7; 41:13-17; 42:15-43:2; etc.

<sup>33</sup> The oracles against the nation in Jeremiah in the MT (chs. 46-51) are found in chs. 26-31 in the LXX. Moreover, although the order of the oracles is different in the MT and LXX, the oracle against Egypt is the first in both traditions.

<sup>34</sup> They both derive from the root *hmn*.

<sup>35</sup> Ezek 13; Jer 23:9-40.

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## **The Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament: A Critical Review**

EUGEN J. PENTIUC

The first part of my title, "The Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament," reflects a long held viewpoint and my strong belief that a specifically Christological interpretation of the Old Testament is possible, permitted, yet not required by the text. This understanding bears on the Orthodox theological and pastoral readings of the Hebrew Scriptures and their application to Christian doctrine and practice.

The second part of the title, "A Critical Review," connotes a certain objectivity that will automatically be restricted by the first part of the title along with all the intellectual and emotional biases of the author.

For reasons of time constraints I have apportioned the topic of this paper into three sections: (1) Jewish Messianology and Christological interpretation of the Old Testament; (2) the relation between the Old and New Testaments: impasse and hopes; and (3) the anthropological view of Genesis 1-2 and biblical hermeneutics.

### **Jewish Messianology and Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament**

The messianic/Christological interpretation of the Old Testament relies on the common view among believers and scholars that Scripture was given to communities of faith: the Great Synagogue and the early Church. Ancient interpreters in both communities, Judaism and the early Christianity, selected and interpreted certain Old Testament passages as

messianic/Christological texts. Though their work was done in two distinct communities of faith, with different intents and expectations, the texts selected by the Christian writers are almost the same as those chosen by the Jewish authors. In the following pages I would like to expound briefly on the commonality that exists between the two collections of messianic texts used by ancient interpreters.

### *Judaism*

There are several traditions of Messianism in Judaism, including rabbinical writings, the Dead Sea scrolls and other extra-scriptural texts, and inner biblical exegetical writings. In the rabbinic writings there are some 450 separate Old Testament passages hinting at Messiah, a number somewhat inflated due to the allegorizing exegesis which marked first-century A.D. Judaism. In the scrolls from Qumran, there is a diversity of messianic interpretation and in the inner biblical exegetical tradition we find internal references to messianic figures and events.

As Gershom Scholem notes in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, "Any discussion of the problems relating to Messianism is a delicate matter, for it is here that the essential conflict between Judaism and Christianity has developed and continues to exist." According to Scholem, the difference between Christianity and Judaism with respect to messianism lies in the fact that for Christians redemption is done in a spiritual, unseen way, while for Jews this redemption is a public event.

In addition, in Judaism the Torah is more central than Messiah, while in Christianity Messiah is the heart. When Paul rejects the Law (i.e., the Torah) he precipitates the separation of Christianity from Judaism. Subsequent Christian claims about Jesus as "the Christ" or "the Messiah" are unacceptable to Jews. Nevertheless, Messiah and the eschato-

logical hope that accompanies his appearances are found in the Jewish scriptural canon and its interpretive corpus.

John Collins is correct when he notes in *The Scepter and the Star* that traditional Christianity construed Judaism as a “religion in waiting.” This classical view is also presented in the handbooks of Emil Schuerer (*The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*) and George Foot Moore (*Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*). However, these latter scholars assumed, incorrectly, that there was a uniform system of messianic expectation in ancient Judaism. Their view is based exclusively on the late writings of the first century A.D., including the apocalyptic texts 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra, which focus on eschatological expectation. Other Jewish sources of this period which refer to Messiah and which were used by Schuerer and Moore are the Psalms of Solomon, composed after 63 B.C., and the Similitudes of Enoch. This latter document is the only known writing that uses the name “messiah” with respect to a pre-existent, heavenly figure, defined, as in Daniel 7, as “one like a son of man.”

Contrary to Schuerer and Moore, however, there was no common Jewish messianic hope at the time of Jesus. This can be demonstrated through the judicious use of documents in the Qumran library. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 greatly expanded the corpus of literature relevant to the study of messianism, and in one of the first Dead Sea Scrolls to be published, the *Community Rule* or the *Manual of Discipline* (1QS), there is a famous paragraph that defines Qumran messianism very well: “They shall depart from none of the counsels of the Law to walk in the stubbornness of their hearts, but shall be ruled by the primitive precepts in which the men of the community were first instructed until there shall come the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel” (1QS 9:11). The norm at Qumran was a binary messianism of priest and king. This testifies to the expectation



of at least “two messiahs,” one priestly and one royal. In a nutshell, the Qumran scrolls indicate a greater diversity of messianic expectations in Judaism around the turn of the era than was thought before their discovery. Since Qumran is no longer regarded by serious scholars as a sectarian community, we can adjudge the details from their writings as indicative of a larger body of thought which reflects an earlier phase of Judaism.

According to Joseph A. Fitzmyer in his article “The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament,” there is in the Qumran texts no evidence of a systematic, uniform exegesis of the Old Testament. This does not mean that there were no fixed traditions at all; rather, it indicates the diversity of approaches to messianic expectation and eschatological fulfillment. Isaiah 11, for instance, is treated as a messianic text both in Qumran (*Pesher on Isaiah*) and outside of it (*Psalms of Solomon*), and we find in these scrolls several references to messianic figures: (1) the eschatological High Priest, or the messiah of Aaron, who figures prominently in the Scrolls; (2) the eschatological prophet; and (3) the heavenly messiah or “Son of Man.” There is some indication, for example in the *Community Rule*, that Messiah was understood even in this period as God’s son: “When God begets the Messiah among them” (1QS 2:11-12).

Fuller documentation on Messianism in the period 200-150 B.C. is found in the book of Jesus ben Sirach written prior to the Maccabean revolt (167-164 B.C.). The text demonstrates a lack of interest in eschatology and messianism. It explains that the author saw the high priest Simon as a mediator of God’s blessing in his own time (50:1-21), hence the sage’s satisfaction with the theocratic regime, and the lack of exploration of messianic themes and expectations.

According to John Collins (*The Scepter and the Star*), the idea that events and figures of the future (including

Messiah and his time) were prophetically foretold by the Old Testament prophets was not strange to the Jewish tradition of the first century A.D. This corresponds to the “proof from prophecy” approach employed by the Christian ancient interpreters, and may represent a continuum of thought developed by Christians out of Jewish antecedents. However, the Qumran Scrolls do not offer a unified point of view of messianism, and one cannot discern any trace of the development of a unified messianism. On the contrary, there are periods of complete silence on the issue, and as James H. Charlesworth rightly noted, “we must not suggest that the Essenes had developed a Messianology that could be easily converted into Christology” (“From Jewish Messianology to Christian Christology,” 225-264).

The study of the Dead Sea Scrolls, therefore, leads to a general conclusion: many of the same texts were regarded as messianic both at Qumran and in the early Church (Ps 2; Isa 11; Num 24; Gen 49; 2 Sam 7; Amos 9). A good illustration of this commonality as it existed between Jewish and Christian caches of messianic texts is offered by the interpretation of Hos 6:1-3. Jewish writers appropriated this text almost simultaneously with Christian believers who saw in Hos 6 a prophecy of Christ’s suffering followed by his resurrection on the third day. Paul referred to this Old Testament text when he wrote that Jesus rose from the dead “on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor 15:4). Simultaneous with Christian messianic use of this text, the Jewish Targum inserted the following note into the text of Hos 6:1-3: “in the days of the resurrection of all.”

### *The Early Church*

For Christians, the heart of the Christian message lies in the relation between Old and New Testaments. On the one hand, in the early Church there were heated debates regard-

ing the treatment of the Old Testament: Was it Christian Scripture or was it, as the second century writer Marcion advocated, to be thrown it out for the arguable reason that the God of the Old Testament does not correspond with the God revealed by Jesus? On the other hand, from the earliest days of the Christian movement, believers searched the Scriptures of the Jewish tradition to find resources for understanding Jesus. This appropriation of the Old Testament signified the struggles of the earliest phase of Christianity (ca. A.D. 70-170) and served to protect against Marcionism.

Larry W. Hurtado, in his book *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Early Christianity*, states that second century Christians used the Old Testament in three ways to demonstrate that Jesus is Messiah: (1) Old Testament “proof texts” were cited to demonstrate that prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus; (2) a typological approach that found in the Old Testament a collection of figures, events, and institutions which foreshadowed Jesus; and (3) interpretations of Old Testament theophanies as apparitions of the pre-incarnate Son of God. All these approaches were quite well articulated by the second century writers, but their presence can also be detected in the New Testament canon.

### *1. Proof from prophecy approach*

Both the New Testament and second century Christian proclamations testify to the fact that Jesus was prophesied in the Old Testament. This can be seen in Matthew’s numerous citations of Old Testament prophecies being “fulfilled” in Jesus (1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14), and other New Testament references to the same, including Mark 14:49; Luke 4:21 and 24:44; and John 12:38. This approach dates to the earliest phase of Christian proclamation. St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 that Jesus died “for our sins” and “rose on the third day,” “according to the scriptures.” Behind the

phrase “according to the scriptures” lies the implication of a cache of Old Testament messianic texts.

All the writings starting with the Apostolic Fathers reflect the “proof from prophecy” approach, with the observation that literary genres differ from author to author. Justin the Martyr is probably the most prolific author in using these “proof texts” to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecy. His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios has given us a classic study of this point in his text *The Pre-Existence of Christ in Justin Martyr: An Exegetical Study with Reference to the Humiliation and Exaltation Christology*. Among other studies on Justin one may mention Theodore Stylianopoulos’ doctoral dissertation *Justin Martyr and the Mosaic Law*, and Oskar Skarsaune’s text *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr’s Proof-Text Tradition* applies the same principles. Justin primarily uses the “proof from prophecy” approach to defend the Christian faith before emperor Antonius Pius (*1 Apology* ca. 150) by relying heavily on Paul as spiritual predecessor. He uses the same approach in defense of Christian claims against Jewish objections (especially in *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, ca. 160). For Justin, the Old Testament predicts the events narrated in the gospels (i.e., virgin birth, Christ’s healing ministry, his being hated, crucifixion, dying, rising, ascension).

## *2. The typological approach*

If the “proof from prophecy” approach is concerned exclusively with the prophetic word, the typological approach deals primarily with imagery.

“Types” are models that anticipated and foreshadowed Jesus. In order to have a typology, a perfect match between type and antitype is expected; otherwise it is only an allegory. For instance, Jacob wrestling with the “man” of Genesis 32:24 (or “angel” as in Hos 12:4) is not a type of Christ,

because Jacob was a liar and cheater, whereas the Lord is sinless.

The earliest illustrations of typology are in the New Testament. This approach stems probably from Paul's observation in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11 that the Old Testament is replete with types to be recognized by the Christians who were seeing themselves as living in the time of eschatological fulfillment. Thus, for Paul, Israel's flight through the parted Red Sea under a cloud foreshadowed the Christian baptism. An excellent example of New Testament typology is John 3:14-15, which refers to the Old Testament account of the bronze serpent (Num 21:9). The Epistle to the Hebrews (1:1-2; 2:1-4; 3:1-6; 7:18-19; 8:1-7) represents one of the earliest and largest caches of types.

In early Christianity, Barnabas (7:3) labels the offering of Isaac (Gen 22:1-14) a "type" fulfilled in Christ's crucifixion. Clement of Rome (1 Clement 12:1-8) sees the crimson cord in the story of Rahab and the two Israelite spies (Josh 2) as a type pointing to the shedding of Christ's redemptive blood. Justin also develops the typological approach. He uses examples found in Barnabas as an indication that there was a common cache of Old Testament "types" in early Christianity.

### 3. *The theophany approach*

As in the typological approach, Justin provides the best examples of theophanies. In the *Dialogue* (61:1) the apologist asserts that "in general, the Old Testament theophanies were appearances of the Son, not the Father." Among the appearances of the pre-existent Son of God in the Old Testament, Justin lists: "beginning" (Gen 1:1), "Glory of the Lord" (Exod 16:7), "Son" (Ps 2:7), "Wisdom" (Prov 8:22-36), "Angel [of the Lord]" (Gen 31:11-13), "God" (Gen 32:28-30), "Lord" (Gen 18; 28), "Word" (Ps 33:6), "Chief

Officer" (Josh 5:14).

In *Dialogue* (60) Justin explains that "the Lord" who addresses Moses from the burning bush (Exod 3) was not the Maker but the pre-incarnate Christ. Apparently, Justin was familiar with a Jewish exegetical tradition, found in some rabbinical texts and based probably on Proverbs 8:22-36 (cf. Sir 24), which postulated two divine powers. As an illustration of this postulate, I would add the difficult text of Gen 19:24, which reads: "Yahweh rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah sulfurous fire from Yahweh out of heaven." Two Yahwehs are mentioned, which may be understood as the two divine powers. It is worth noting that Melito in his *Paschal Homily* (ca. 160-80) to the Church of Sardis uses the same approaches as Justin the Martyr, demonstrating once again the commonality of the messianic caches.

This commonality is primarily due to the scholarly principle of "inner biblical exegesis," or "the Bible's interpretation of itself," which assumes a re-reading by biblical texts of previous textual traditions. A good example of this can be found in Hos 12:4: "He wrestled against an angel and he prevailed." In Hosea's re-reading of Gen 32, Jacob wrestled with an "angel" rather than with a "man." This re-reading inspired Cyril of Alexandria's Christological interpretation (PG 71, 284 A-B) which reads: "For an angel in the form of God wrestled with him ... Thus, the mystery about Christ was predicted through the wrestling with the angel."

### **The Relation Between the Old and New Testaments: Impasse and Hopes**

In any discussion pertaining to Christ's view on the Old Law, the text of Matthew 5:17 is commonly quoted: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." The "fulfillment" to which Jesus refers is not an endpoint, as usually believed,

but is rather a long, intricate, and gradual process beginning with the Incarnation of the Logos and continuing throughout Christ's life and the various phases of the Church's history. The vertical paradigm long in vogue, with the Hebrew Scripture at the bottom and the New Testament triumphing at the top, overlooks the Jewishness of the Old Testament and ignores the reality of a living, vibrant, Jewish community of faith. If we conceive the messianic "fulfillment" as a process inaugurated by Christ, however, and not simply as an endpoint, then the vertical scheme must be replaced by a horizontal paradigm of two concentric circles: one circle circumscribing the entire history of salvation as recorded and hinted at by the Hebrew Bible, and a second circle superimposed on the first, and representing the activities of Messiah in all his scriptural incarnations. This latter image might be labeled "divine mercy" as intimated by the New Testament.

I would designate the coming of Christ as a circle of "divine love" because, as Paul puts it in Hebrews 1:1, Messiah was expected "at the end of those days." John the Baptist's question directed to Jesus in Matthew 11:3 "Are you the one who is coming, or are we to expect someone else?" mirrors a similar belief in an eschatological messiah. That Christ came before the end of time one may see from the account of the two demoniacs in Matthew 8:29: "Suddenly they shouted, 'What do you want with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before the time?'"

In the horizontal paradigm outlined above, the history of salvation "recorded" narratively, poetically, and prophetically by the Old Testament is a circle larger than "divine mercy" which lies at the center or heart of the history of salvation. The circle at the center, through the course of history, expands to the point at which the two circles overlap; this will be the culmination of the history of salvation, the eschaton. Jesus' observation is specific on this point: "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:21). The kingdom, rep-

resented in my model by the interior circle of divine mercy, is at the center and expands both spatially, among nations, and temporally, as history and time unfold.

The relation between the two Testaments has almost always been viewed through a vertical paradigm of binaries: promise-fulfillment or law-gospel. All the models pertaining to the relationship between the Old and New Testament are Christian models and thus they all show a certain movement from the Old to the New Testament. Referring to these models, Walter Brueggemann speaks of "maneuvers toward the New Testament" while warning biblical scholars to acknowledge the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament as an independent text. The Old Testament is a polyphonic, multi-dimensional corpus, which provides the foundation for the New Testament. This perception of the text validates an innovative and growing form of biblical interpretation, which is attuned to the concrete needs of the community of faith to which the sacred text is addressed. The polyphony of the text invites the interpreter to an imaginative act of exegesis matching only the voices involved. "Thus as a confessing Christian," declares Brueggemann (*Theology*, 732), "I believe that the imaginative construal of the Old Testament toward Jesus is a credible act and one that I fully affirm." At the same time, the polyphony of the text must keep the interpreter away from collapsing the Old Testament into the New Testament. The Old Testament does not belong exclusively to Jewish communities, but at the same time it cannot be manipulated by Christian interpreters as merely the vestibule of the New Testament.

Brevard Childs' statement that both Testaments "bear witness to Jesus Christ" (*Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*, 78) ignores the Jewishness of the Old Testament and emphasizes the "Christological claims" of the Old Testament. Responding to this over-Christian attitude towards the Hebrew Bible, Rolf Rendtorf (*Canon and*



*Theology*) draws the attention of the Christian scholarly world to the "Jewish reality," which must not be forgotten whenever we engage in biblical theology, and especially in Christological interpretation. There is a diversity of opinions and of approaches to Christian biblical interpretation, but I emphasize the debt we owe to the Jewish scriptures, which we must acknowledge and consider in our interpretive work and in our praxis. The relationship between Messiah of the Old Testament and Christ of the New Testament can be usefully conceptualized through the use of Jürgen Moltmann's distinction between "doxological Christology" and "eschatological Christology," as found in *The Way of Jesus Christ*. This difference marks our understandings of Christ present and active in salvation history and at the parousia.

Brueggemann respects the construals of Jesus as found in the New Testament and the early Church, while warning that these construals are not to be found in the testimony of ancient Israel, but are rather beyond the text. I concur with his argument that Christian understandings sometimes went beyond the generative power of the sacred text. For example, in Christian "transpositions," such as the switch from "messiah" to "the messiah"; or the identification of the "church" as "the Israel of God." Christ is "messiah" [indefinite noun], but not because he is not the expected messiah or just a messiah among many. Christ is not "the messiah" [definite noun] because thus far what we know about him is only a part of his personality, the suffering, the humbled aspect accompanied by the resurrection, that is the foretaste of final glory. The glorious element is yet to be made public, yet to be fully revealed. This will occur at the end (*eschaton*), when we will be able to grasp the entire portrayal of the Messiah. Brueggemann's point is well taken, but I must disagree with his mandate to Christian scholars to resist any "untenable claim that such mutations are hinted at in the Old Testament" (*Theology*, 733). This is merely a

scholarly assumption which swings between the possible and the probable. I strongly believe, based on the commonality between Jewish and Christian caches of messianic texts that there is a high probability that the Old Testament may hint at messianic events which include Christ's life episodes. As Jürgen Moltmann has pointed out, messiah both divides the Jewish and Christian communities and links them at the same time. Jesus is not the endpoint of "the Messiah." Jews and Christians are challenged at present to revise their old schemes where possible in a common effort to better understand their respective Christological / Messianological interpretations of the Old Testament.

### **The Anthropological View of Gen 1-2 and Biblical Hermeneutics**

Anyone who deals with the intricate discipline of hermeneutics is aware of the endless disputes at the scholarly level, which are all centered on the question: "Where is the meaning? In the text? Outside the text? In front of or behind the text?"

Proponents of literary criticism generally argue that meaning is in the text, and in order to extract it one should utilize linguistic analysis. The weakness of this approach is its overly emphatic focus on detail (words taken as separate units), and its predilection to overlook narrative in its entirety.

The systematic theologian argues that the meaning of the text lies with the writings of the Fathers and the dogmatic decisions of the church. In short, meaning resides in the interpretive works falling under the imposing rubric we call "Tradition." Left unsupervised (or lacking a critical understanding of the tributaries which comprise Tradition) this approach affords too much weight to interpretation, which reduces the sacred texts to merely an element of the archives

of Tradition.

Historical criticism finds its value in the understanding that the biblical canon must be historically contextualized. The determination of sources, authors' intents, and the original audience, all have a great impact on textual composition and interpretation. The weakness of historical criticism, which relies too much on Cartesian premises, is its assumption that everything can be explained without reference to the theological claims of the texts and the communities of faith which use these texts. The final product of a critical historian becomes only a "history of religion" and Yahweh and Messiah tend to be jettisoned from Israel's life.

Which hermeneutical approach should an Orthodox biblical scholar use while dealing with messianic texts of the Old Testament? I will present some preliminary thoughts regarding the Orthodox use of a hermeneutical paradigm based on our anthropological understanding of Gen 1-2.

According to the two accounts on creation of man (the "Yahwistic" account in Gen 2:7, and the "Priestly" account in Gen 1:26-27), the "image of God" in man has dual inflections, or more precisely "humanity" has two facets: (1) unity in diversity as a reflection of the triune God; and (2) man as the "living breath" of God as long as he relates to his Maker. Regarding the first facet, we may say that there is a unity of ideas which defines Scripture as a whole. This wholeness is not monotonous, but is rather sustained by a diversity of texts, words, and phrases. Meaning cannot be found exclusively in isolated words or phrases as the proponents of literary-historical criticism would claim.

The second facet is articulated by Genesis 2:7, a text which is as ambiguous as it is theologically significant. After God breathed a breath into the nostrils of the creature fashioned from the dust of the ground, "man became a living breath." Therefore, there can be no philosophical or ontological dichotomy between "soul" and "body," nor does man possess

a soul as the animals do (cf. Gen 1:30). Man's essence is not found in what he has, but in who he is. According to Genesis 2:7, this "who" is "the living breath of God." With this in mind, I suggest that the meaning of the sacred text is to be found in the unity and diversity of its writings: sentences, phrases and words that constitute the whole Scripture we understand as the living breath of God. Meaning is not enclosed in the sacred text as a bird in a cage; rather the meaning is found as long as Scripture's unity is not sacrificed for the sake of the contextual diversity of its voices, and as long as it relates to the living God.

In order to reach the true meaning of the sacred text therefore, one must analyze the text linguistically, rhetorically, and social-culturally. Only in this holistic approach to interpretation can one experience the polyphony of the sacred text, its detailed nuance, and its important contexts. Every pastor should make use of these exegetical steps in the quest to find and convey meaning and significance. However, as an Orthodox student of the Bible, I think such an interpretive mode alone is not sufficient. The sacred text is a living, intricate entity, and the living breath of God. The role of Holy Tradition is to provide us the appropriate theological space for a comprehensive and balanced interpretation.

Working with the messianic texts of the Old Testament for a number of years, and more recently preparing a book on this topic to be published by Paulist Press, I have always been interested in theological significance and pastoral application of Old Testament messianic texts. How can these texts be connected to the feast days of Christ and made accessible to our faithful? My work is located in the same cache of messianic texts as that of early Christian writers, yet focuses primarily on the Hebrew text. I attempt to advance the search for biblical meaning, while keeping in mind that the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament permits but does not require a Christian interpretation.

At the end we must not forget that the sacred text has meaning and significance as long as this text is connected to the living God from whom it originates. Working within the interpretive space of Tradition provides us with a beacon, and it reminds us of the imperative that Scripture is not a simple text to be fragmented into its myriad sources, authors, intents and words, but is offered to us as God's most precious gift.

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## **The Four Gospels: Text as Interpretation**

ARCHBISHOP DEMETRIOS TRAKATELLIS

It is a joy to be in fellowship with you throughout this very important theological conference. I say that this conference is important, foremost, because of its topic, "Sacred Text and Interpretation: Perspectives in Orthodox Biblical Studies". Biblical interpretation has been a central function in the life of the Church, and a conference focused upon it is vital indeed. Second, this present gathering is important because it deals with biblical interpretation from an Orthodox angle, pointing to future developments and to truly promising perspectives for Orthodox biblical studies. Thirdly, this is an important conference because its participants come from various theological schools from America and Europe, bringing with them a wealth of exegetical interpretation and an impressive personal contribution to the biblical field, thus creating the proper conditions for an exciting exchange of insights and ideas during the four days of our colloquium. The honoree of the conference, Professor Savas Agourides, adds to its significance since he has been an internationally recognized Orthodox New Testament scholar, untiringly and constantly producing biblical exegesis of prime quality, and decisively promoting initiatives that advance the publication of a large number of books and articles of biblical introduction and interpretation.

In view of all the above, I feel the need to express my deep gratitude to the President of Hellenic College/Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Fr. Nicholas

Triantafilou; to the Dean, Fr. Emmanuel Clapsis; and to the entire Faculty of the School of Theology for organizing this important conference. Particular thanks belong to the biblical professors of the School, and especially to Fr. Theodore Stylianopoulos, a bright and creative Orthodox New Testament scholar, who is highly regarded by both Orthodox and non-Orthodox, even Jewish, biblical scholars in the USA and abroad. I also offer words of warm thanks to the esteemed colleagues who come to our conference from various parts of the country, and even more from Athens and Thessaloniki.

In my opening remarks to such a stimulating symposium as the present one, I should like to offer some thoughts and comments on the topic, "The Four Gospels: Text as Interpretation." Here, the main thought is that the four Gospels constitute not only a sacred text, but also the interpretation of this very text. To put it differently, the four Gospels present not only the revealed truth of God, but they are, at the same time, the first uniquely and genuinely *biblical* commentaries. Allow me to start with some basic facts.

We have before us the four canonical Gospels of the New Testament, namely, the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Mark, the Gospel of Luke, and the Gospel of John. These are four different texts which, nonetheless, deal with the same fundamental theme: the person of Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, pre-existing God who for us and for our salvation became man and took the form of a servant [μορφήν δούλου λαβών] (Phil 2:7); the one who was crucified, who died on the cross and was buried, who was resurrected from the dead and ascended into heaven, and who will come again to judge the living and the dead. Furthermore, the very same four Gospels narrate the deeds and words of Jesus Christ the Lord as the proclaimer and establisher of the kingdom of God; the one who invites all people to a radical change through repentance, since the kingdom of God is

now at hand [Μετανοεῖτε· ἤγγικε γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν] (Matt 3:2).

Consequently, it has been pointed out that the four Gospels, although different, proclaim one and the same Lord Jesus Christ, his unique ministry and his one gospel message. Here numerous contemporary books and articles constituting a pertinent contemporary bibliography on this subject could be mentioned, as for instance the article by Helmut Koester, "One Jesus and Four Primitive Gospels" (*Harvard Theological Review*, 1966); the book by Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2000); the book by Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); the book by James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); the book by Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Jesus in the Gospels: Biblical Christology* (Louisville: Westminster, 1995), and the book by Marcus Borg and N.T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (San Francisco: Harper, 1999).

The topic of this quite contemporary bibliography is ancient, reaching back to the early Christian period, and is a topic that has been dealt with by various authors of antiquity in diversified ways. In this instance, we could cite Justin Martyr, Tatian, Clement of Alexandria, St. Irenaeus, and, later, St. Athanasius the Great and Eusebius of Caesarea. Tatian needs special mention here because he is the author who, as we know, attempted around the middle of the second century to combine the texts of the four canonical Gospels and create one continuous narrative. This work, known as "Diatessaron" (Διὰ Τεσσάρων), survived in the Syrian Church until the fifth century A.D., but it finally gave way to the four canonical Gospels, dying away as a text in Church usage.

Tatian's attempt to synthesize the four Gospel texts reveals a tacit assumption: that the four Gospels proclaim one and the same Jesus Christ regardless of their stylistic dif-

ferences and variations in content. It is, however, extremely significant that Tatian's attempt found formidable literary and theological opponents in the persons of prominent theologians of the early Church like Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, and Origen. These early exegetes knew well that the four Gospels were not only accounts of the one gospel of Jesus Christ, his person and ministry, but simultaneously were also interpretations of the one Gospel. They simply read the four Gospels as both texts and interpretations that projected the inexhaustible wealth of the one divine revelation in astonishing, fascinating, and brilliant variations.

I shall now proceed with more specific data that show the four Gospels as interpretive texts, as biblical commentaries, so to speak. For obvious restrictions of time, allow me to present two relevant series of examples:

The first of these examples is shown in the very opening of each of the four Gospels, which indicates the interpretative approach of the evangelists. What exactly do we encounter here?

We start with the Gospel of Matthew. Even a passing acquaintance with the genealogical material presented in Matt 1:1-17 will suffice to convince the reader that this presentation of the lineage of Jesus Christ is a work of theologically interpretative art, not of genealogical science. The very first verse of the Gospel of Matthew, Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, υἱοῦ Δαυίδ, υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ (Matt 1:1) ("The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham"), solemnly announces and firmly establishes in a declaratory way the Davidic and Abrahamic origin of Jesus the Messiah. Thus, the birth of Christ is interpreted in the frame of a genealogical retrospective that includes the figures of David and Abraham, two who guarantee the messianic identity of Jesus.

The genealogy then itself serves the same purpose.

Choices clearly have been made by the evangelist to include certain elements, for instance four “fallen” women, and to exclude others so that the genealogy works out to three sets of fourteen generations. Fourteen is the double of seven, a sacred number, so that here a numerological cue is offered that the birth of Jesus is by a divine plan that has been pre-ordered and has been brought to its full consummation in his nativity. Here, we have a textual reference to an event, i.e. the nativity of Christ, and concurrently offering a messianic interpretation of this event through a brilliantly presented genealogy.

We move to the opening chapter of the Gospel of Mark. Mark does not start with the nativity of Christ but with the preaching of John the Baptist. The first sentence, however, is of a declaratory nature: Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, Υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ (Mark 1:1) (“The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God”). Having established the context of what is going to follow, i.e., the evangelion and Christ as the Son of God, Mark introduces John the Baptist. The introduction is made by a lengthy quotation from the Old Testament which combines a passage from Exodus 23:20 and Isaiah 40:3. The combination presents an ingenious merging of the idea of a messenger of the Messiah and the idea of such an event happening in the desert. This is a clear specimen of a Markan interpretation of the Christological role of John the Baptist based on two Old Testament passages which in their original setting were not Christological.

The Markan opening demonstrates an important consideration of the Gospel text as interpretation, which is twofold: the Gospel not only and most obviously interprets the events of Christ’s life in the terms of Old Testament revelation, but also interprets the Old Testament literature in the context of the events surrounding the appearance of Christ.

In the opening chapter of the Gospel of Luke, we encoun-

ter yet another eloquent example of the Gospel both as text and as interpretation. The two stories narrated in chapter 1, namely the birth of John the Forerunner and the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, are cast in the form of Old Testament typological events. The child of the promise, born to barren and aging parents as in the case of John the Forerunner is clearly reflective of the well-known cases of Abraham-Sarah, Isaac and Hannah-Samuel. On the other hand, the narrative of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary displays characteristics of the so-called “call” narratives of God’s anointed servants (e.g., Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah), marked by the sequence of divine call – human objection – divine retort – human acquiescence.

The narrative in the first chapter of Luke is a masterpiece, combining typological interpretation of the Old Testament model stories and extensive hymnological expansions with direct reference to the incarnation and nativity of Christ. Here again, as in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, the work of the evangelist as both narrator and interpreter is apparent.

Coming to the Fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John, we encounter the same phenomenon in considerable variation. Chapter 1 of this Gospel begins with the famous prologue in which elements of Old Testament reference are easily discernible by the introduction of John the Baptist as a decisive witness for Jesus, the promised and expected Messiah. At the same time, the prologue of the Gospel, instead of offering a narrative of the birth of Christ in the form of the Matthean or Lukan accounts, presents an amazing statement of pre-existence and incarnation. This statement constitutes a bold interpretation of the birth of the Messiah in a language which is an astonishing amalgamation of phrases from Genesis 1:1, Proverbs 8:22, the Wisdom of Solomon 9:1, Psalm 33:6, and common Hellenistic religious terminology.

Just the description of the birth of Christ in John 1:1-5 and 1:14 constitutes a superb example of the Gospel text as

simultaneously event and interpretation. This text is worth quoting:

1. Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. 2. οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. 3. πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν. 4. ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων: 5. καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.

14. Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας. 15. Ἰωάννης μαρτυρεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ κέκραγεν λέγων, οὗτος ἦν ὃν εἶπον, ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν,

1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2. He was in the beginning with God; 3. all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. 4. In him was life and the life was the light of men. 5. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

14. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. 15. John bore witness to him, and cried, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me...'"

With the citation of the above text, I now close the series of examples based on the first chapter of each of the four Gospels and proceed with a second series of examples of a different nature. They are indicative of the same phenomenon, namely the Gospel text as interpretation.

As already stated, the four Gospels present in essence the one Jesus Christ. The Lord is depicted by all four evangelists as a divine teacher, as a miracle worker, as healer, as

heavenly revealer of the ultimate divine plan for man and the universe, as crucified and risen, as true God and true man. The emphases and the nuances, however, in the above christological images are different in each evangelist and this is precisely a matter of interpretative choice by each one of them.

In Matthew, for instance, Jesus Christ the Lord is depicted as the true, incomparable and absolute Teacher, the divine Rabbi. It is in this context that Matthew has preserved the unique sermon of the Mount in three long chapters (5-7) in which we encounter the solemn declarations of the type "You have heard that it was said, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,' but I say to you..." (Matt 5:38-39). Here the authority of Christ as the Teacher of the new law is clearly placed above the authority of the Old Testament Mosaic law. Matthew, throughout his Gospel, consistently projects the same image by offering extensive pericopes containing the teachings of Jesus. The message is clear: Christ is *the* Teacher of the *absolute Truth* superseding Moses and the Old Testament in general. But this is text and interpretation because it shows that Matthew selects from the available Christological material of the primitive Church the data which emphasize Jesus as *the* Teacher.

The evangelist Mark follows a different way, showing other interpretative preferences, although dealing with the same material. He has limited pericopes depicting Christ as teacher but plenty of cases painting him as an amazing miracle-worker. He presents him as having the authority to perform mighty deeds that only God can perform, while at the same time he is from the very beginning of his ministry (cf. ch. 3) the target of a deadly plot against him by the religious leaders. Mark consistently presents Christ under the scheme of authority and passion, showing him concurrently as the almighty Son of God and as the humble Son of Man constantly attacked by his opponents and finally crucified.



One needs only to read chapters 8-10 of Mark to behold the masterpiece of a text presenting a fascinating narrative interpreted in the light of the christological scheme of authority and passion. The evangelist is simultaneously recording facts and accompanying them by subtle interpretation.

In the Gospel of Luke we come across another exegetical option. This evangelist displays elements common to Matthew and Mark. He, like them, works on the basis of the main Christological scheme of public ministry (teaching and miracles), cross, and resurrection. He interprets, however, Christ's person and ministry in the light of an immense love and tender care for the suffering, the rejected, and the poor. It is not accidental that Luke has preserved for the Church the parables that have been characterized as gospel within the Gospel, namely the parables of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and the Publican and the Pharisee at prayer. Also it is not accidental that Luke offers a version of the Beatitudes (ch. 6) with striking characteristics differing from the parallel Beatitudes in Matthew (ch. 5). Luke has preserved the variation Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοί, ὅτι ὑμετέρα ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ, while Matthew has Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι. Christ in Luke 6 speaks about the poor, whereas in Matthew 5 he speaks about the humble. The same holds true for another beatitude in the same passage: μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες νῦν, ὅτι χορτασθήσεσθε, the reference being simply to people who are deprived of food, whereas in Matthew the beatitude reads μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην. Luke, by offering the variation pertaining to the poor and hungry, interprets Christ's saying as a word of love and concern for the poor and hungry. This is text and interpretation.

The Gospel of John opens to us an immense world of text and interpretation. Christ the Logos and Son of God is in this case, as in the three synoptic Gospels, the teacher revealing heavenly plans; he is the miracle-worker, although John is

very selective in the number and kind of miracles he recounts, and he is the crucified and risen Lord. But the Gospel of John offers in addition the picture of Jesus as the pre-existing God and Logos through whom everything was created; the only Son of the Father engaged in deep theological debates and discussions, during which heavenly truths are revealed. For the incarnation John uses the word καταβαίνων, the One coming down, and for the return to the heavenly Father after resurrection he uses the word ἀναβαίνων, the One going up. For the crucifixion he uses the verb ὑψοῦμαι, to be lifted up, and even the verb δοξάζομαι, to be glorified. The Gospel of John saved for us also the superb formula ἐγώ εἰμὶ, "I am," used by the Lord in conjunction with fundamental concepts like the concepts of light, the way, the truth and the life. All this amazing wealth of special terminology is a genuine and accurate record of the words of Christ, but the inclusion of such a terminology in the Gospel of John is undoubtedly the result of an interpretative decision. The text of the Gospel of John is text and interpretation dictated by Christological presuppositions, and serving the need of the Church to which the evangelist addressed his *evangelion*, his version of the good news.

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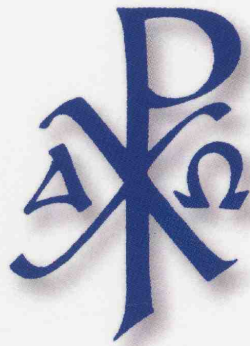
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# GOTR

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## Editor's Note

THOMAS FITZGERALD

This issue of *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* contains papers delivered at a conference on "Sacred Text and Interpretation: Perspectives in Orthodox Biblical Studies" which took place at Hellenic College/Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology on October 28-November 1, 2003. Fr. Theodore Stylianopoulos, the Archbishop Iakovos Professor of Orthodox Theology and Professor of New Testament at Holy Cross organized the conference.

Due to production delays, the publication of the *Review* has fallen behind schedule. This accounts for the fact that the papers of this significant conference are contained in this issue of the *Review*, which is number 47:1-4 (2002).

I wish to express my appreciation to Fr. Stylianopoulos for also serving as the guest editor of this edition of the *Review*. He undertook this responsibility with much care and diligence.



SACRED TEXT  
AND INTERPRETATION

Perspectives in Orthodox Biblical Studies

*Papers in Honor of  
Professor Savas Agourides*

Theodore G. Stylianopoulos

*Guest Editor*



## Introduction

THEODORE G. STYLIANOPOULOS

It was in 1972 that I first met Professor Savas Agourides. The occasion was the first international Orthodox biblical conference in Athens. I had read his writings and was eager to observe him in action. But now he had taken ill. As three of us headed to visit with him in the hospital, I thought I would find a sick and frail man. I could not have been more wrong. In a few minutes, he seemed to come alive and, fully energized, began to lecture to us. He said we must work for a revival of biblical studies in the Orthodox Church. The Church needed urgent renewal. Theology had become too formal and distant from the lives of the Greek people. Issues of social justice and international peace had to be addressed. He had studied in the United States and had taught at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in 1962-63 (from which I had already graduated and so had missed him). He thought that the Orthodox renewal would come from America, where young Orthodox scholars had greater freedom to work. The whole time I nodded my head and could utter no more than two sentences. The visit left me with an indelible sense of awe for this unique figure of evangelical power. As the years have passed I have been privileged to have had more contacts and longer conversations with him. My admiration for the integrity of the man and my appreciation of his prophetic witness stretching over more than half a century and still vibrant today have only deepened.

It is with great satisfaction therefore that I introduce the present issue of the *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, to

be followed by a separate volume, both published in honor of Professor Savas Agourides. The present papers derive from an unforgettable conference held at Hellenic College and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Brookline, MA, October 28-November 1, 2003, in tribute to Professor Agourides. The conference served as a colloquium of biblical and patristic scholars with specific interests in the interpretation of Holy Scripture. Nearly twenty official participants presented papers and engaged in lively recorded discussions. Regrettably these exchanges are not being published for technical reasons. Other scholars, qualified auditors, and students of Holy Cross and the Boston Theological Institute, a consortium of theological schools in the Boston area, took part in the academic sessions. At the opening of the conference His Eminence Demetrios Trakatellis, Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, delivered the keynote address. The highlight of the conference was the granting of the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity to Professor Agourides at a convocation in Holy Cross Chapel, with a full procession and all the usual academic trappings, at which Professor Agourides presented a scholarly lecture. The contributions of His Eminence Demetrios and Professor Agourides are included in the present papers.

The number and diversity of the papers prevent extended discussion of them. The conference did not concentrate on a specific theme or area. The choice of topic was left to the individual participants in order to assure maximum participation at the conference where scholars could interact and establish connections. The arrangement of the papers roughly follows their sequence at the conference. There is obvious overlapping in the arrangement of the contents under Old Testament, New Testament, and Hermeneutics. The papers of two contributors, Christos K. Economou of the University of Thessaloniki and John Anthony McGuckin of Columbia University, who were unable to attend the conference, are

also published. Some presenters were unable to submit a final form of their papers for publication. I should also mention that other Orthodox biblical scholars from the United States had been invited to the conference but their schedules did not permit their attendance.

Asking for the reader's indulgence, I take this opportunity to offer a few observations pertaining to contemporary Orthodox biblical studies as evidenced in the conference papers. My intention is not to critique or commend particular papers, although I will refer to virtually all of them as examples. Nor do I wish to leave the impression that my observations have in view the whole range of Old and New Testament studies in various universities and seminaries in Orthodox countries such as Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Russia. The magnitude of such work, including the difficulties of language and access to sources, remains a significant challenge for future conferences. Nevertheless, the present papers reflect aspects and trends that are no doubt representative of the field of Orthodox biblical studies.

The first notable characteristic of these papers is the acceptance of biblical criticism. Orthodox biblical scholars feel free to employ the tools and methods of international biblical scholarship as these have developed especially after World War II among Protestants and Roman Catholics without sharp confessional differentiations. Given the settled traditionalism over the last millennium pervading Orthodoxy, it is of no small consequence that Orthodox biblical scholars now assume a significant range of freedom and a high level of comfort in doing biblical research in accordance with international academic standards, including textual, historical, literary, and rhetorical criticism. This assumed sense of security is evident, for example, in the papers not only by Archbishop Demetrios and Professor Agourides, but also by Paul Nadim Tarazi, Petros Vassiliadis, John Fotopoulos, and Antonios Finitzis. All of these scholars deal directly with the

biblical text, employ known scholarly methods, and make no special appeals to authorities apart from the critical argumentation based on the evidence of the texts themselves. This does not mean that their authors do not presuppose such authorities, but the fact that they do not invoke them indicates a remarkable level of ease and freedom of engagement with contemporary biblical studies. One could disagree with their specific positions on this or that, but the disagreement would be welcome on the same principles of scholarly research conducted in a collegial and ecumenical manner.

A significant aspect of this assumed freedom is a new perception of the biblical texts themselves. The sacred texts are seen as no longer absolutely fixed and rigid, but texts that have been shaped in part by historical circumstances and the literary and theological interests of the sacred authors. Tarazi, by means of a literary analysis of common traditions in Jeremiah and the Pentateuch, makes the bold claim that a "Jeremian" school that produced the Book of Jeremiah is also responsible for the redaction of the Pentateuch and that from the angle of a prophetic anti-Temple and anti-priestly critique. Archbishop Demetrios in his piece expounds the scholarly view that the Gospel writers are not merely reporters but also interpreters of both particular events and the entire ministry of Jesus, emphasizing distinct christological elements according to their own individual perspectives and communal needs. John Fotopoulos perceives that in 1 Corinthians 8:1-9 the Apostle Paul is in part quoting slogans of Corinthian rivals and is using Hellenistic rhetorical devices to persuade his Corinthian readers. Further, Petros Vassiliadis, a long advocate of the existence of the Q Source as an independent document, highlights the dynamics and diversity of early Christianity and its divergent understandings of gospel in ways that some might regard as venture-some, even revisionist. Quite apart from the specifics, however, the point here is that the biblical text is seen in a new



light. This new light yields a more accurate understanding of the historical nature of Scripture, but also introduces a certain ambiguity that qualifies the traditional perception of the authority of Scripture and certainly undermines biblical fundamentalism.

A second feature of many of the papers is their patristic orientation. Orthodox scholars are very much concerned about being faithful to the theological tradition of the Church and specifically to the interpretation of Scripture by the Church Fathers who themselves were primarily students of the Bible. The cases mentioned above indicate that large areas of contemporary scholarly work can occur apart from direct or necessary reference to the patristic heritage. That phenomenon is due to the specialized and detailed nature of modern biblical research. Nevertheless, that all Orthodox scholars share a welcome and deep commitment to the theological and exegetical legacy of the Church can hardly be doubted. Harry S. Pappas and George Parsenios, who produced papers out of their respective doctoral dissertations submitted at Yale University, meticulously analyze the exegetical work and acumen of two great ancient interpreters of the Antiochian school, John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia. Nicholas Conostas offers a fascinating study of a patristic exegetical tradition, that on divine deception in reversal of the satanic connected respectively with Christ's death and the fall of humanity. Professor Conostas' study exemplifies the astonishing freedom, the rich imagination, the exegetical perspicuity, as well as the evangelical power of theological biblical interpretation that can be mined from the treasures of the patristic heritage. From another angle Eugen J. Pentiuc subtly advocates the theological propriety of the patristic "messianic," that is, christological interpretation of the Old Testament, an interpretative tradition with deep roots already in Judaism. Professor Pentiuc simultaneously affirms the legitimacy of the historical-critical approach and

points out that the Old Testament permits but does not necessarily require Christian interpretation. His reference to the inevitable communal basis of all interpretation is a key hermeneutical factor that ought not to be missed.

This brings us to a final observation pertaining to hermeneutics, that is, the theory behind the science and art of interpretation. Hermeneutics is a slippery technical term covering just about everything from the significance of the practical matter of classifying and evaluating manuscripts to the extremely abstract philosophical questions about linguistics and the communication of meaning. Essentially, it is systematic reflection on what we do and how and why we do it – the various elements, factors, and principles involved in the study of a given field. In biblical studies the big hermeneutical questions focus around the understanding and interpretative roles of faith, reason, revelation, Scripture, tradition, Church, and the new knowledge acquired in the ever-changing circumstances of human history. Hermeneutical discussions can easily spiral into abstraction laced with jargon, but they can also prove extremely helpful in providing clarity and direction in the use and interpretation of the Bible, and beyond that in understanding the nature of Christian theology and the mission of the Church itself.

The hermeneutical concerns of our authors are expressed in various ways. Of the authors already mentioned, Pappas and Conostas explore the patristic principles and methods in themselves, while Parsenios shows how patristic interpretation can illuminate the current scholarly understanding of the literary character of the dominical discourses in John 13-17. Ioannes Karavidopoulos, in his overview of textual criticism in the Orthodox Church, appeals for a full critical edition of the Byzantine text type and the standardization of liturgical biblical texts. Proper interpretation and use of “the treasures of faith” begin with the assessment of manuscripts and the establishment of the most accurate form of the bibli-

cal text. From his perspective, Christos K. Economou presents the case for the universality of the Christian mission as evident in the words of the risen Jesus and the Apostle Paul, a universality based on theological as well as historical factors. In the end Professor Economou interestingly leaps to a contemporary application of his thesis – the endorsement of ecumenical engagement and of efforts by the Greek state toward European cooperation. Demetrios C. Passakos more directly takes on the discrepancy between the abolishment of Jewish laws of ritual purity in the New Testament and their re-emergence in Orthodox liturgical practices, especially as related to women, an issue of no small importance as far as sound piety and spirituality are concerned. No doubt the most prophetically bold hermeneutical challenge comes from Panteleimon Kalaitzidis' "The Temptation of Judas: Church and National Identities." His is a most astonishing example of Orthodox self-criticism in exposing what appears to be rampant nationalism among the Orthodox people. He calls for a conscious and thorough renewal of authentic ecclesial identity centered on the Eucharist and the Church as the body of Christ, and yet he does not negate positive elements of cooperative efforts between Church and state.

Still other papers deal with hermeneutics directly. The paper by Konstantin Nikolakopoulos broadly critiques the Western rationalism that infects revisionist developments in modern biblical studies, resulting in the rejection of the biblical miracles and the very notion of the self-revelation of the living God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Starting from a traditional position, but without rejecting scientific biblical studies, Professor Nikolakopoulos affirms the ecclesial and liturgical character of scriptural interpretation and insists that no autonomous interpretation of the Bible can rightly exist outside the Church. John Anthony McGuckin, a former New Testament professor who has moved to patristics and Church history, offers a magisterial critical review

of the history of hermeneutics in the West, then follows with a coherent framework of Orthodox interpretative perspectives. McGuckin strongly advocates Orthodox engagement with Western hermeneutical theories and methods invoking the unassailable precedent set by the great Church fathers who co-opted ancient exegetical and rhetorical methods, incorporating them in their own vision of biblical interpretation. Professor McGuckin's fourfold proposal of a holistic Orthodox hermeneutics, namely, what he analyzes as ecclesial reading, spiritual consonance, hermeneutical authority, and pastoral utility, marks a substantive base for further sustained discussion among Orthodox theologians and biblical scholars.

The upshot of the papers is that Orthodox biblical studies give evidence of advancement, diversity, and much work to be done. We do not yet enjoy the kind of flowering in Orthodox biblical studies that Professor Agourides had hoped for in 1972. However, the training of young Orthodox scholars who attain teaching positions in universities and colleges, and the increasing Orthodox bibliography in scriptural studies throughout the world, promise continued progress. Diversity is inevitable, amply evident among the Church fathers themselves. Diversity, although it can be divisive, it can serve positive purposes in the quest for not only clear understanding but also effective application of truth in the changing contemporary contexts. Among the many things to be done on the part of Orthodox theologians and biblical scholars, one of the major ones is to build bridges between their fields and develop in the process a common vision of the overlapping and yet distinct tasks of systematic theology, patristics, liturgics, and biblical study. The holistic orientation of Orthodox life and thought should temper one-sided claims of primacy, whether of doctrine, or the Church fathers, or Liturgy, or Bible. Orthodox scholars, in a collegial and mutually respectful manner, need to be more direct

and forthright about challenging each other, critiquing each other, and establishing specific areas of research and debate that can evidence sustained progress on particular issues and questions. In dialogue with each other and with the methods and developments of Western scholarship, they need neither repeat failures of the past through eager accommodation, nor shirk from engagement out of fear or ignorance or by means of sweeping denunciations. The universality of the gospel and of the Orthodox faith urge public witness through compassionate incarnational embrace of the struggles and achievements of humanity everywhere. The Church fathers themselves, such as Athanasius, Gregory the Theologian, and Maximus the Confessor, have taught us to discern between, on the one hand, new terminology and new methods, which may be necessary and welcome, and, on the other hand, abiding theological principles and truths to which we must steadfastly hold. The difference is between form and substance, and discerning their relationship is of course part of the unavoidable hermeneutical challenge.

Finally, theological studies of every sort cannot be satisfied with mere academics. A divided and wounded world awaits a word of grace and healing. Rigorous intellectual work must continue. But at every step the question of application to the life of the Church and of benefits to the wider society calls scholars to accountability. In this task Orthodox biblical scholars can play a vital role by the very nature of their calling, dealing directly with the gospel, the ministry of Christ, the birth and mission of the early Church, the evangelical depth and vibrancy of the apostles and the first Christians. To speak the truth, we Orthodox face a paradox. While our revered traditions embracing the sacraments and the writings of the Church fathers are saturated with the Scriptures, most Orthodox Christians, regrettably theologians and clergy included, are woefully deficient in the knowledge of the Scriptures. Some would even make

a virtue out of this lamentable failure, claiming that that is the proper Orthodox way, a contention that flies in the face of what St. John Chrysostom and other patristic luminaries teach about direct reading and study of the Bible. The re-discovery of Scripture, and with it the transforming power of the gospel and the new creation in Christ, continue to be urgent tasks in the Orthodox Church for the recovery of its own evangelical character. Perhaps it is not too bold to say that the future growth and effective witness of Orthodoxy in the world will be connected to what Professor Agourides hoped and worked for – a rediscovery and application of the Scriptures as a word of grace and truth, a word of healing and unity, a word of justice and peace first in the Church and then through the Church in the world.

**Citation for the Honorary Degree  
Doctor of Divinity  
awarded to  
SAVAS AGOURIDES  
Professor Emeritus,  
University of Athens, Greece**

By his academic work and public witness over nearly six decades, Professor Savas Agourides has been one of the most energetic and pioneering thinkers of modern Greece.

Born in Athens, Greece, he graduated with ARISTA (high honors) from the Theological School of the University of Athens in 1943. Awarded a grant by the World Council of Churches, he pursued graduate studies in the New Testament in America at Duke University from which he obtained the Ph.D. in 1950. After returning to Greece and completing his military service, he worked for the International Social Service in collaboration with the World Council of Churches. In 1954 he obtained a second doctorate, now from the University of Athens.

His teaching career began at the University of Thessaloniki as Assistant Professor in 1956 and Full Professor in 1960. Eight years later he returned to his *alma mater* where he taught until retirement in 1985 as required by law. At both universities he served as dean and member of numerous councils. At Athens he was elected President of the University in 1983 and President of the Theological School during 1983-1985. His teaching ministry, always marked by extraordinary enthusiasm and consummate skill, included an unforgettable year as Visiting Professor at our own Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology during 1962-1963. Holy Cross gradu-

ates fondly remember Professor Agourides as a vibrant and captivating lecturer.

The achievements of Professor Savas Agourides have been immense, including numerous publications in the areas of Jewish apocalyptic literature, history of New Testament times, introduction to the New Testament, hermeneutics, commentaries on several books of the New Testament, translation of the New Testament in demotic Greek with other colleagues, and countless studies and articles in scientific journals. His interests have ranged far, wide and deep, embracing Scripture, Church, theology, religion, philosophy, psychology, spirituality, politics and society. These interests have been expressed in a ceaseless and astonishing stream of productivity by means not only of scholarly studies but also through public lectures, informal seminars, radio talks, television appearances, and opinion pieces in major newspapers and periodicals. Indeed, his crowning gift is his witness that “the Word of God is not fettered” (2 Tim 2:9) in the halls of academia but rather a liberating and transforming Word addressed to all institutions and social conditions, including the Church, the state, international organizations, business corporations, as well as culture and society in general.

Professor Agourides, you have advanced the field of biblical studies as no other Orthodox scholar. You have testified to the power of God’s Word in the public square. You have raised a prophetic voice pertaining to issues of social justice and international peace. You have been a man of sterling integrity and a good friend of Holy Cross throughout the years. In recognition of your exceptional contributions to scholarship, theology, and Christian ministry, we have asked you to give us the singular privilege of accepting the highest honor this sacred School can bestow, the degree of Doctor of Theology, TIMHC ENEKEN.

Brookline, Massachusetts  
October 30, 2003























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## **The Last Temptation of Satan: Divine Deception in Greek Patristic Interpretations of the Passion Narrative\***

NICHOLAS CONSTAS

*"Perhaps a god has deceived us"*

Jorge Luis Borges

### **Introduction**

A remarkable number of Greek patristic thinkers gave expression to the theory that Satan was deceived by Christ, who exploited his adversary's mistaken belief that the object of his desires was a mere man and not the deity incarnate. Driven by an insatiable hunger for human bodies, the demonic appetite was inexorably drawn to devour the seemingly mortal flesh of Jesus. That flesh, however, was but a seductive lure concealing the power of divinity which brought about Satan's downfall and even (in some traditions) his salvation. The crucial events in this drama of deception were Christ's agony in the garden and his suffering on the cross, moments of apparent weakness and vulnerability which patristic writers daringly reconfigured as the cunning ruses of a master strategist defeating the enemy through his own devices. Such a radical reinterpretation of scripture was achieved largely through the tropes of typological and allegorical exegesis which sought to explain (and thereby eliminate) the "shame and folly of the cross" (cf. 1 Cor 1:18-25; Heb 12:2; Deut 21:23), along with the attendant spectacles of Christ's

apparent fearfulness and uncontrolled emotion.

Having succumbed so pathetically to the fear of death, the suffering figure described in the Gospels was in flagrant violation of Roman decorum, a construction of the Stoics, whose teachings on the endurance of pain were vaunted as the ideal expression of masculine behavior and identity. It will be worth remembering that the Stoics distinguished between the “sage” (σοφὸς) and the “fool.” The sage was a perfected creature who attained wisdom (and thus divine similitude) by divesting himself of the ignominious marks of creaturehood, especially fear and suffering. The primary characteristic of the sage was, in a word, *apatheia*: freedom from passion. Thus the anti-Christian philosopher Celsus (ca. A.D. 176) argued that, if the Christian savior was in any sense divine, “he would have never uttered loud laments and wailings, nor prayed to avoid the fear of death, saying something like: ‘Oh Father, let this cup pass from me’ (Matt 26:39).”<sup>1</sup>

By the fourth century of the Christian era, the Stoic valorization of endurance in the face of pain found an unexpected ally in the theology of Arianism. Arius, a priest in the church of Alexandria, argued that the passion of Christ was a clear sign that the wounded savior of the Gospels was not to be identified with the impassible divinity. Based on his cowardly performance in the garden of Gethsemane, Arius and his followers concluded that Christ was neither transcendently wise nor divinely dispassionate. And whereas the Arians conceded that Christ could be said to have “participated” and “grown” in wisdom (cf. Luke 2:52), he could in no way be identified with Wisdom itself. In response, the opponents of Arianism argued that the inability to discern the germ of divinity hidden within the husks of suffering was the result of a superficial reading of scripture. Fixated on surface forms, the Arians had blinded themselves to the deeper meaning of the sacred text. At the same time, the fail-

ure to understand the true nature of signification was itself a sign that the superficial reader was incapacitated by a system of ultimately demonic metaphysics. Uninformed literalism, and its accompanying low christology, was a reading of scripture that the Arians shared with the devil himself.

That Christ suffered, cried out loudly and died, could not be denied by anyone. The Gospels had all put the end of Christ's life at the dramatic center of the story, suggesting a sort of convergence point for human hopes and expectations. How then, in the cultural atmosphere of late antiquity, could the viability of these narratives be maintained? How could one reclaim the discredited and dehumanized Christ, and restore to him the dignity and value that he seemed to have lost in his shameful death at the hands of the Romans? How, too, could the post-Constantinian church, increasingly institutionalized within the structures of the Roman Empire, promote a criminal condemned to the cross by a Roman governor as the one, true God?<sup>2</sup> To be sure, various answers were ventured in response to these questions. One of them, the subject of this study, endeavored to negotiate the problem of the passion by placing it within the framework of an elaborate two-fold exegesis. Authorization for such a framework was believed to have been provided by scripture itself, which effectively reconfigured problematic signs through a hermeneutical movement from "letter" to "spirit" (2 Cor 3:6). Through allegorical deferrals of meaning, the offending signum could be blurred and obscured, and, when necessary, subjected to systematic reversal and inversion. In this way, the sign of the cross, the ultimate "sign of contradiction" (σημείον ἀντιλεγόμενον) (Luke 2:34), was reconfigured through a movement transforming manifest "shame and folly" into an emblem of the "secret and hidden wisdom of God" (1 Cor 2:7).<sup>3</sup>

After an introductory discussion of the notion of "divine deception," the following study turns to a consideration of



two works by Gregory of Nyssa (*Catechetical Discourse*, and *Sermon on the Three Days between Christ's Death and Resurrection*), followed by an analysis of the *Homily on the Passion and the Cross* attributed to Athanasius of Alexandria. These fourth-century texts, along with others from across the late-antique period that will be discussed in this paper, reconfigure the passion narrative as a divine strategy calculated to deceive the devil. The fourth century was a time of crisis for the Christian community, which struggled both to legitimize itself within a cultural system that had long derided its faith in a crucified God, and to define its relationship to a political order that had lately sought to destroy it. At the same time, Christian thinkers had to confront the challenge of Arianism, a culturally sanctioned religious attitude that refused to identify the suffering person of Christ with the transcendent god of the philosophers. In response to these challenges, Gregory of Nyssa and the author of the *Homily on the Passion and the Cross* developed a sophisticated theory of interpretation, a poetics of representation involving rich and unstable ambiguities, not unlike the intertextualist tropes of contemporary deconstructivism. For these writers, scriptural interpretation was closely coupled with a theological vision of the person of Christ, and thus the hermeneutical possibilities of narrative were made to reflect the meta-narrative of divine-human possibility. That is, the interpretive activity of deception and deferral, which refuses to fix its christological referent within a closed narrative destiny, virtualizes the very activity of Christ himself, the Word incarnate, who eludes (and indeed exploits) closure within categories constructed by demonic desire and the culture of power.

### **Divine Deception**

Situated within a hermeneutical framework of movement from "letter to spirit," the becrimsoned canvas of the pas-

sion narrative was given a rather curious coat of varnish. The basic idea was that meaningful contents are often concealed behind an unprepossessing exterior. Things, in other words, are not always what they seem. But this principle, patently obvious in and of itself, blended readily with the popular Platonic belief that the world of truth was different from the world of appearances. The world of appearances was a world of change and flux. It was an empire of signs, inherently unstable, ambiguous, dissembling, and transitive. It was, in a word, deceptive, and any figure incarnate in that world was just as likely to conceal the truth as to reveal it. Admittedly, the category of deception is an unlikely place from which to launch a successful apologetical reconstruction of the passion narratives; but since classical antiquity the use of deception was sanctioned as an acceptable pedagogical, strategic, and therapeutic device.<sup>4</sup>

For example, deception was permissible for fathers who thereby concealed their affection for their children in order to discipline them. So too for physicians, who were expected to sugar their bitter pills and conceal their sharpened scalpels beneath the surface of a sponge. Ancient philosophers also dealt with the question of falsehood and deception. Plato's Lesser Hippias, for instance, deals systematically with lying and deceit in the context of a debate about who was the greatest Homeric hero: honorable Achilles ("true and simple") or Odysseus the liar ("wily and false"). To the surprise and consternation of historians of philosophy, Plato weaves the crown of victory for Odysseus, arguing that only the liar knows what the truth is, whereas the one who knows only the truth does not truly know even that.<sup>5</sup> Given their Olympian grasp of eternal verities, there was no end of lying and trickery among the Greek and Roman gods, and disguise and deceit is typically not a human but a divine strategy, a divine deception. Resting on a broad cultural foundation, and with a distinguished literary and philosophical lineage, the

category of deception was hurried to baptism by Christian thinkers, to whom this study now turns.

### Gregory of Nyssa and the Fish-hook

The Christian redaction of the notion of “divine deception” is perhaps best known through the work of the fourth-century bishop and theologian Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335-395), whose metaphor of the “fish-hook” represents a decisive moment in his dramatic theory of the atonement. According to this theory, Satan was initially deceived by the apparent ordinariness of Christ’s humanity and unwittingly consumed his mortal body in death. He soon discovered, however, that he had been duped into biting off more than he could chew: Christ is divine, and therefore immortal, and the unexpected presence of the deity in the bowels of the underworld signaled the liberation of the dead from the forces of death and decay. In his *Catechetical Discourse* (a somewhat popularizing handbook of Christian teaching), Gregory introduces this idea in the context of a striking typological reversal in which the savior sets out to “deceive the deceiver”:

Since it was not in the nature of the opposing power to undergo the unveiled manifestation (γυμνήν ἐμφάνειαν) of God, the deity was hidden (ἐνεκρύφθη) under the veil (προκαλύμματι) of our nature, so that, as with ravenous fish, the hook (ἄγκιστρον) of the deity might be gulped down along with the bait (δέλεα) of the flesh ... In this way, he who practiced deception (ὁ ἀπατεῶν) receives the very same in return. He who first deceived (προαπατήσας) humanity by the bait of sensual pleasure is himself deceived (ἀπατᾶται) by the presence of the human form. And whereas the enemy wrought his deception (ἀπάτη) for the ruin of our nature, the wise one (ὁ σοφός) used his plan of deception (ἐπίνοια τῆς ἀπάτης) for salvation.<sup>6</sup>

Gregory makes further use of the image of the fish-hook

in a related passage from his sermon on the resurrection, this time foregrounding the figure of Wisdom, who cleverly made the wise look rather foolish. Here is the text:

“Omnipotent Wisdom” (παντοδύναμος σοφία) (Wis 7:23), coming into the “heart of the earth” (Matt 12:40), was able to make “utterly foolish” (καταμωρᾶναι) (cf. Rom 1:22; 1 Cor 1:18) that great “Mind” (cf. Isa 10:12) which dwells in it, turning his counsel to folly, and catching the wise one (σοφὸς) in his cunning (πανουργία) and to turn back upon him his clever devices (σοφὰ ἐγχειρήματα). For this reason, having swallowed the bait (δέλεα) of the flesh, he was pierced with the fish-hook (ἄγκιστρον) of deity, and so the dragon (δράκων) was caught with the fish-hook, just as it is said in the book of Job, “You shall catch the dragon with a fish-hook” (Job 40:25).<sup>7</sup>

In the first of these two passages, Gregory takes as his point of departure the established theological belief that the deity graciously reveals itself in forms proportionate to the limited capacities of the human mind. Here, however, the gift of divine accommodation is provocatively offered to the devil, inasmuch as the divinity renders itself an object of desire to the mind of the “opposing power.” Implicating itself in the gaze of the demonic, the incarnate God seductively appears as so much “bait,” a graphic image of predation and deception by means of which, according to Gregory, the deity paradoxically appropriates the devil’s own artifice. Anticipating the objection that he has committed God to a course of unethical (not to mention diabolical) action, Gregory argues that it was only right that an act of deception should be undone by an act of deception, a notion that accords with the “riddling definition of justice used by the poets” outlined by Plato in the Republic (1.332CD).

Gregory further stresses that God’s deceit, unlike the devil’s, was enacted for therapeutic purposes, thereby classifying it among forms of deception culturally acceptable in late

antiquity. If God deceives, tempts, and seduces, it is to capture, immolate, and ultimately redeem the desire of the other. In the second passage, Gregory ascribes these activities to "Omnipotent Wisdom," a feminine figure who is herself the "very being of Christ," the irreducible ontological core, as it were, of the various guises and modalities of divine revelation, including her persona as "Word."<sup>8</sup> The instability of the revealed text and the various reversals of its referents promoted by Gregory's exegesis are here matched by the gender reversal of Christ, who in the form of "Wisdom" appears as a femme fatale dressed quite literally to kill. As the two passages cited above indicate, the "fish-hook" is a device which encapsulates Gregory's theory of "salvation through deception." Before pursuing our study of this figure any further, however, it will be instructive to survey the status of Gregory's theory in contemporary scholarship.

### Scholarly Objections

Scholarly assessments of Gregory of Nyssa's "fish-hook" have generally been rather prim and patronizing. Hastings Rashdall called Gregory's theory "childish and immoral."<sup>9</sup> J.A. MacCullough deemed it "perverted and repulsive."<sup>10</sup> Gustaf Aulén found it "highly objectionable, disgusting and grotesque."<sup>11</sup> Georges Florovsky characterized it as "self-contradictory, inconclusive and inappropriate."<sup>12</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr found it "unimportant and implausible."<sup>13</sup> Cyril Richardson confessed that it was "repellent,"<sup>14</sup> while Frances Young has twice characterized it as a "crude and distasteful trick."<sup>15</sup> Anthony Meredith dismissed Gregory's idea as "novel and strange," noting that it "hardly had many followers."<sup>16</sup> Richard Jakob Kees, perhaps having read some of these assessments, does not consider the image of the fish-hook in his recent monograph on Gregory's Catechetical

Discourse.<sup>17</sup>

Disdain for Gregory's fish-hook and the theory of divine deception is clearly an established topos within contemporary scholarship, and, like many scholarly constructions, it has distorted the nature of the actual evidence. Far from being a grotesque idiosyncrasy limited to the writings of Gregory of Nyssa, the image of a divine fish-hook baited with the flesh of Christ was used by dozens of writers from the mid-fourth through the seventh century and beyond, including such notables as Athanasius, John Chrysostom, John of Damascus, and Maximus the Confessor, to mention only a few.<sup>18</sup> Among Latin writers, Augustine introduced a variation on this theme in the form of a mousetrap baited with Christ's blood.<sup>19</sup> Augustine (perhaps by way of Peter Lombard, who quotes him), was undoubtedly the source for the iconography of the fifteenth-century Mérode altarpiece, which, at the moment of the incarnation, depicts Joseph seated in his carpentry shop having just completed work on a mouse-trap.<sup>20</sup> The altarpiece's symbolic depiction of divine deception, not at the time of the passion, but at the moment of the incarnation, suggests that the enfleshment of the deity is itself an act of concealment, a theme that we shall consider below.

Returning to the image of the fish-hook, it should be noted that this seemingly peculiar metaphor was not invented *ex nihilo* and subsequently imposed upon scripture. Rather it was derived from a theologically consistent conflation of several Biblical passages, including Job 40-41; Psalm 103(104):26; and Isaiah 27:1, all of which are concerned with mocking the cosmic dragon and dragging him up from the depths of the sea on a fish-hook.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, one does not typically go fishing in mythopoetic ponds without a worm, and thus Psalm 21(22):6 ("I am a worm [σκῶληξ] and not a man") was granted a central place in this tradition. To be sure, with Psalm 21(22):6, the fish-hook surfaced directly in the center of the passion narrative itself, for when Christ cried out

in dereliction from the cross, it was this Psalm's first verse which he chose to give voice to his pain.<sup>22</sup> Patristic exegetes were thus confronted with the striking image of the crucified Christ writhing like a worm on a hook.<sup>23</sup> These textual patterns were further interlaced with John 3:14, where the lifting of Christ on the cross is compared to the bronze serpent (ὄφις) that Moses lifted up on a pole in the wilderness (cf. Num 21:8-9). The figure of Jonah swallowed by the whale and regurgitated intact, invoked by Christ as a foreshadowing of his own death and resurrection (cf. Matt 12:39-40), was also influential in the elaboration of this exegetical meta-narrative.<sup>24</sup>

Two texts will serve to illustrate the place of "Christ the Worm" in the subsequent patristic tradition. The first is from a letter written by the sixth-century Palestinian ascetic Barsanuphius (d. ca. 545), who contrasts the "worm" of Psalm 21(22):6 with the "undying worm" of Mark 9:48 (cited from Isa 66:24) which is said to feed like a maggot on the flesh of the damned. Barsanuphius avers that, just as those who were bitten by serpents were cured by the "bronze serpent" in the book of Numbers, so too does the crucified worm of Psalm 21(22):6 provide the antidote to the afflictions caused by the worm in the Gospel of Mark:

This worm (i.e., Christ) came for my sake to deliver me from the worm of corruption which corrupts the human race. And because the worm of corruption (cf. Mark 9:48), which corrupts and is corrupted, goes down into the wounds and causes them to putrefy and stink, the incorruptible worm came, of whom it is said: "I am a worm and not a man" (Ps 21[22]:6). And just as the corruptible worm plunges into the wounds, so the incorruptible worm went down into the "lower parts of the earth" (Eph 4:9), and from there began to destroy all the uncleanness of the old worm; and having thus cleansed them all, he led them up and remained himself without corruption. This is the worm which cleansed Job of the worm of corruption (cf. Job 7:5; 25:6), and which

said to him, "Arise, gird up your loins like a man" (Job 38:3). This worm also "drew out the dragon with a hook" (Job 40:20) while hanging on the tree (i.e., of the cross).<sup>25</sup>

A second example may be found among the works of an author who wrote under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite, an early sixth-century writer deeply indebted to the theology of Gregory of Nyssa. In his treatise *On the Celestial Hierarchy*, the psalmic worm appears in a bestiary of "dissimilar symbols of the divine." In this cabinet of theriomorphic curiosities, the deity is on display as a "lion" (cf. Gen 49:9; Rev 5:5; Hos 5:14); a "panther" (Hos 13:7; 5:14); a "leopard" (cf. Hos 13:7; Rev 13:2); and an "angry she-bear" (Hos 13:8), although the prize exhibit is the "lowliest and most ignoble of all, for the experts in things divine gave the deity the form of a worm" (Ps 21[22]:6). Dionysius considers such symbols to be particularly appropriate for the unknowable deity which paradoxically "reveals" itself only by "concealment" in finite (and therefore dissimilar) forms and names. The invisible, in other words, can enter visibility only at the cost of essential misrepresentation. In his *Third Letter*, the Areopagite suggests that the mystery of the Word incarnate cannot be reduced to the surface narratives regarding Jesus of Nazareth: "The divinity remains hidden even after its revelation, or to speak more divinely, it is hidden in the revelation; for the mystery of Jesus is hidden, and may be uttered by no word or mind, but even when spoken, remains unsaid, and when conceived, unknown." The otherness of the sign – its utter non-resemblance to that of which it is the sign and presence – is for Dionysius the privileged form of divine self-manifestation, the perfect figuration of that which cannot be figured.<sup>26</sup>

### **Pseudo-Athanasius, Homily on the Passion and the Cross**



As the texts cited above suggest, the worms and fish-hooks of the Bible became attached to a larger theory of dissimulation and deception which found its center of gravity in the narratives of Christ's passion and death. A little-known sermon attributed to Athanasius of Alexandria, called the *Homily on the Passion and the Cross*, to which we may now turn, presents a systematic application of this theory covering virtually the entire narrative of Christ's last days on earth. As its title suggests, the *Homily* is an exegetical sermon expounding the meaning of the passion narrative in the Gospel of Matthew. If not written by Athanasius himself, the work is clearly the product of the "school" of Athanasius, and therefore probably stems from late-fourth-century Alexandria.<sup>27</sup> The setting is the annual liturgical commemoration of Christ's passion, and "Athanasius" (hereafter without quotation marks) labors endlessly to make one point: namely that Christians should not be ashamed of the suffering of Christ and his cross.<sup>28</sup> As we shall see, Athanasius' apologia crucis hinges on the notion of divine deception (fish-hook included) which provides the basic trope for his narrative subversion and subsequent reinterpretation of the suffering and death of Christ.

The homiletical drama begins with Satan's fatal desire to discover the true identity of Christ, a thing he was unable to do on the mountain of temptations. Athanasius informs the congregation that:

The devil wanted to know what he was unable to know when he tempted him (i.e., Christ) on the mountain, namely, "whether or not he is the Son of God" (cf. Luke 4:3). At that time he was put to shame, and kept watch (ἐτήρει) (cf. Gen 3:14: τηρήσει) for the time (καιρός) of his death. For it is written in Luke that, "When the devil completed all his temptations, he departed from him until an opportune time" (ἄχρη καιροῦ) (Luke 4:13). This (i.e., the passion) is now that time (PG 28:209, lines 25-32).<sup>29</sup>

Fearing, however, direct confrontation with the "di-

vine and unapproachable power" (ibid., lines 39-40), Satan must operate slightly off stage, inciting the Jews, provoking the Romans, and rousing the rabble of Jerusalem. But "because the Savior knew that the devil's plan depended on the knowledge [of his identity], he concealed (ὑπέκρυπτε) his divinity and acted like a human being (ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐπολιτεύετο)" (ibid., lines 43-44). In this regard, Athanasius asserts that Christ is "just like a general conducting a war, who devised (ἐστρατήγησε) a great and wondrous strategy, and so assumes the appearance (σχηματίζεται) of one staggering under Satan's power, so that when the enemy draws near he might completely subdue him" (PG 28:228, lines 16-23).<sup>30</sup>

Athanasius further compares Christ to a "noble wrestler" (γενναῖος παλαιστής) who, when seeing his opponent about to take flight, feigns weakness in order to lure him back into the ring (PG 28:209, lines 47-49; PG 28:212, lines 1-5).<sup>31</sup> The imagery of a wrestling match is further highlighted by an allusion to the figure of Irus, a minor character who appears at the climax of Homer's *Odyssey* (18.45-135). Irus was one of the grasping suitors who had taken over Odysseus' household during the latter's prolonged return from the Trojan war.<sup>32</sup> In a stratagem to reclaim his home, Odysseus adopts the persona of a weak old man seeking hospitality. He meets instead with the swaggering bravado of Irus, who unwittingly challenges the disguised hero to a wrestling match. To everyone's surprise, Odysseus gives him quite a thrashing, and Irus is hauled out of the palace a broken and bloody pulp. The preacher's audience would have been well-versed in this Homeric episode, and we can imagine their delight when Athanasius announced that:

the devil, having arrogantly presumed (τολμήσας) against the Lord, has now become another Irus, cast forth from the universe, and trampled upon by all ... and the dragon who boasted that he was rich has been stripped of all, and he is

now a naked and impoverished Irus, utterly despoiled (PG 28:233, lines 12-14; PG 28:236, lines 11-13).<sup>33</sup>

It is rather astonishing to encounter the mythical figure of Odysseus, the archetypal trickster, making a cameo appearance in a passion sermon in order to vindicate the sufferings of Christ.<sup>34</sup> Like a wily Odysseus, Christ deploys a strategy of deception in order to lure the devil into mortal combat at the climax of a Christian epic. This strategy is particularly pronounced in the garden of Gethsemane, where the weakness of Christ is reconfigured as an act of deliberate deception calculated to destroy the devil:

And this is why he was “distressed” around the time of his death, and began to “grieve,” and “prayed that the cup might pass from him” (Matt 26:39), and cried out, “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak” (Matt 26:41) ... But when the evil one heard the Lord saying, “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak,” he <mistakenly> thought that the Word was weakened together (συνησθέναι) with the body, and not rather that the body was strengthened by the power of the Word (τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ Λόγου συνισχύετο καὶ τὸ σῶμα) (PG 28:212, lines 7-11; PG 28:216, lines 29-32).<sup>35</sup>

This cleverly scripted agony in the garden successfully dupes the devil inasmuch as the spectacle of Christ’s emotional weakness is in fact a grand theater of diversion. Viewed through Athanasius’ inversive looking-glass, nothing is what it seems to be, and when the homilist arrives at the scourging of Christ by the soldiers, his audience beholds not the robe of mockery, crown of thorns, soldiers’ insults, or death by crucifixion, but rather an imperial and indeed divine triumph, complete with royal purple robe, solemn crowning, acclamation of kingship by the military, dramatic spoliation of the enemy, and public adventus with the trophy of the cross.<sup>36</sup> Throughout the sermon, Athanasius repeatedly points out that, contrary to appearances, the cross is not a sign of shame and defeat, but is instead the very weapon

that slew death:

On the fish-hook of your humanity (ἐν ἀνθρωπίνῳ ἀγκίστρῳ), fastened to the trophy of the cross, you led about the dragon, the serpent, the devil ... and you toyed (παίξαντος) with him from the very beginning, creating him for the purpose of mockery (καταπαίξεσθαι) (cf. Job 41:24; Ps 103[104]:26) (PG 28:240, lines 18-24).<sup>37</sup>

Christ's visible defeat on the cross is the sign of his invisible (but nonetheless palpable) triumph, and, contrary to all appearances, it is in fact the devil who undergoes crucifixion.<sup>38</sup> Here the homilist seems indebted to Origen's exegesis of Josh 8:29, "Joshua (i.e., Ἰησοῦς ) hanged the king of Gai on a double tree (ἐκρέμασεν ἐπὶ ξύλου διδύμου)," in which he states the following:

There is a mystery hidden in this passage which is "hidden from many" (cf. 1 Cor 2:7); but we will attempt to open it, not with our opinions but with the witness of sacred scripture ... The "king of Gai" can stand for the devil. But how he came to be crucified on a "double tree" is worth investigating. The cross of Christ was a double cross. You might think it a strange and novel idea when I say that the cross was double, but what I mean is that it can be considered as double, or from two sides. Because the Son of God was crucified visibly in the flesh, but invisibly on the same cross, the devil with "his principalities and powers was nailed to the cross" (cf. Col 2:14-15). Will not this seem true to you if I bring Paul forward as a witness to it? Hear then what he has to say: "That which stood against us," he says, "he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them on the cross" (Col 2:14-15).<sup>39</sup>

Origen's metaphysic of crucifixion, domesticated in popular sermons on the passion, was eventually incorporated into the hymnology of the Byzantine church. In the first stanza of a liturgical poem written by Romanos the

Melodist (d. ca. 555), the foot of the cross, planted on the summit of Golgotha, descends deep into the earth impaling the body of Hades, who cries: "Who has fixed a nail in my heart? A wooden lance (λόγχη) has suddenly pierced me (ἐκέντησεν) (cf. John 19:37; Rev 1:7) and I am being torn apart!" In the third stanza, the poet describes the cross as a cosmic tree, the roots of which, Hell complains, "have entered my soul; they have gone down into my depths!"<sup>40</sup>

### Seduction in the Garden

These dramatic reversals are paralleled in a large number of patristic sermons on the passion which eventually became part of the Byzantine lectionary. Despite the centrality of the cross, however, the pivotal moment in these sermons is not the crucifixion, but rather the scene in the garden of Gethsemane. The agony of Christ in the garden marks an important moment in the meta-narrative of divine deception, for it is here that the devil is utterly seduced by the hypnotic flickering of Christ's humanity. In a pseudo-Chrysostomic sermon which deals extensively with Matthew 26:39, Satan says, "I have been deceived, for who would not be tricked by such words? For he was frightened in the face of death and said, 'My soul is very sorrowful, even unto death' (Matt 26:38), and he prayed to the Father saying, 'Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me' (Matt 26:39). These words enticed me like bait."<sup>41</sup> The deception in Gethsemane is also critical to the narrative sequence of *The Gospel of Nicodemus*: "Then Satan said to Hades, 'There is one of the race of the Jews, Jesus by name, who calls himself the Son of God. But he is a man. I know that he is a man, for I heard him saying, 'My soul is sorrowful, even unto death' (Matt 26:38). But Hades said, 'If you say that you heard how he feared death, he said this to deceive you and laugh at you, wishing to seize you with a strong hand'."<sup>42</sup>

The emphasis on Christ's deception of the devil in the garden of Gethsemane, which seems to detract from the centrality of the crucifixion, is in fact a typological requirement intended to mirror and thus reverse the devil's deception of Eve in the garden of Eden. According to the logic of typological recapitulation, it was only right that an act of deception should be undone by deception. In Gethsemane, therefore, Christ deceived the deceiver by typologically appropriating the devil's allurements and stratagems. Like a homeopathic cure from Plato's paradoxical pharmacy, it is the primal deception which determines the ingredients for its own neutralizing antidote.<sup>43</sup> Another Pseudo-Athanasian text, surrendering unreservedly to the vertiginous currents of these typological associations, hazards the following:

This was the cause of the incarnation, and the reason why God did not hunt for the devil in his unveiled divinity, because the devil himself, when he decided to deceive (πλανῆσαι) humanity, did not approach Eve with his demonic nature unveiled. Rather, he clothed himself in the flesh of the serpent (cf. Gen 3:2), and in this manner entered paradise and deceived her. For the cunning one (δόλιος) knew that if he approached Eve with his demonic nature unveiled, he would not have been able to deceive her. This is why he clothed himself with the serpent as if with flesh, and through the flesh-bearing serpent he deceived (ἐπλάνησε) Eve. The serpent was plainly manifest (ἐφαίνετο), but the devil was not. And through the visible serpent which appeared (διὰ τοῦ φαινομένου), the invisible (ἀθεώρητος) serpent, the devil, acted. For at the fall of our first parent, two natures were brought together in one person (δύο φύσεις ἐν ἐνὶ προσώπῳ ἀπτήγον). So too, in the case of Christ, two natures – humanity and divinity – were united in one person (δύο φύσεις εἰς ἓν πρόσωπον ἡνώθησαν). And the humanity was made plainly manifest, but the divinity was not made manifest, and through the humanity which appeared, the invisible divinity acted. And these two natures, I mean divinity and

humanity, restored exiled humanity to paradise. And this is why God was incarnate and became man.<sup>44</sup>

In this stunning typological juxtaposition, the devil becomes a serpent, coiled around a tree, in order to seduce Eve, in response to which the deity becomes a worm writhing on the cross, the tree of life, in order to seduce the devil. Equally striking is the daring (and, to my knowledge, unparalleled) use of the Chalcedonian formula of a hypostatic, or more precisely, prosopic union to designate Satan's appearance under the form of the "most crafty of brutes" (Gen 3:1).<sup>45</sup> This suggests, in other words, that the incarnation of the Logos mirrors and thus reverses the "incarnation" of Satan in the flesh of the serpent. At the same time, it should be noted that the word ἀπῆγον (translated above as "brought together") means "carried away," in the sense of "being abducted" or "led astray," the illicit asymmetry of which serves to mitigate the shock of the Chalcedonian *definitio fidei* applied to the archetype of demonic indwelling. Although Gregory of Nyssa does not mention the scene in the garden of Gethsemane, the reversals described above are fundamental to the argument of his *Catechetical Discourse*, cited at the outset of this discussion.<sup>46</sup> For Gregory, the deception of Eve in the garden of Eden provides the paradigm for the divinity's deception of the devil:

Beauty exists both in truth and in appearance. Under these circumstances it is a matter of risk whether we happen to choose the real beauty, or whether we are diverted from it by some deception (ἀπάτη) arising from appearance (φαίνόμενον). But (in the garden of Eden) the mind was diverted to that beauty which is not such, being persuaded, through the deception of the devil, that that was beauty which was just the opposite. For his deception would never have succeeded, had not the illusion (φαντασία) of beauty been spread over the hook (ἄγκιστρον) of vice like a bait.<sup>47</sup>

This is why the deity was concealed (περικαλύπτεται) in flesh, in order, that is, to secure that the devil, by looking upon something congenial (σύντροφον) and kindred (συγγενές) to himself, might have no fear in approaching that transcendent power, deeming what was seen an object of desire (ἐπιθυμητόν) ... This invention, whereby the enemy was enabled to apprehend (χωρητόν) that which

cannot be apprehended (ἀχώρητον), is a manifestation of supreme Wisdom.<sup>48</sup>

Gregory's definition of beauty as existing both in "truth and appearance" reflects his systematic division of human reality into "mind and sense," and "being and non-being," both of which he holds together in creative tension.<sup>49</sup> This dichotomous organization enables him here to distinguish sharply between aesthetics and ethics, so that the responsibility for successfully negotiating the gap between the (sensuous) sign and its (intelligible) referent falls squarely upon human freedom and the power of self-determination.<sup>50</sup> However, the mind can fail to grasp the true nature of the world, fall prey to deception, and mistake the appearance of the sign for that which it seeks to render present. In response, the deity transgresses the divisions of created being, incarnating itself within matter in order to seduce humanity away from its obsession with sensuous signs.<sup>51</sup> Gregory suggests, moreover, that such a ruse will also redeem the devil, whose finite malignancy will (he argues elsewhere) acquiesce to infinite goodness like the shadow of an eclipse yielding to "light unbroken by darkness." In the end, he muses, the "adversary himself will not be likely to dispute that what took place was just and salutary."<sup>52</sup>

### **The Poetics of Disguise**

The metaphor of the fish-hook and the theory of divine deception served to define Christ as a figure who was both within the tumult of the world and yet radically beyond it. It explained how the sufferings of Christ did not compromise but rather enhanced his divine status. Finding "strength" in "weakness" (cf. 2 Cor 13:4) was, as we have seen, accomplished through the systematic bifurcations of a two-fold exegesis, a hermeneutical practice which virtualized the dualities of Christ himself.<sup>53</sup>



The function of “doubling” as a response to trauma and violence has recently been studied by Wendy Doniger in her work *Splitting the Difference: Gender and Myth in Ancient Greece and India*,<sup>54</sup> and it will be instructive to consider our patristic sources in light of her analysis of ancient Greek literary traditions. Doniger observes that subsequent retellings of Homer’s *Iliad* tend to avoid or otherwise eliminate the abduction and rape of Helen of Troy by Paris. This was typically done by suggesting that the “real” Helen had never been abducted at all: a double had been taken in her place while the real Helen of Troy remained safe and unaffected by the rape of her phantom.<sup>55</sup> To the doubled figure of Helen, Doniger adds the story of Ixion, inflamed with love for Hera, who embraces not the goddess but a cloud that has taken her shape; and Vesta, who carried off her priest to the halls of Jupiter immediately before his murder: his assassins stabbed only his phantom.<sup>56</sup>

The phenomenon of such doubling as a form of bifurcation is a trope, Doniger argues, which seeks to protect and preserve what is most highly valued while at the same time “maintaining appearances.” However, she emphasizes that the splitting which seeks to obviate the problems of violence, defilement, guilt, or shame by projecting them onto a shadowy substitute, inevitably produces a new destabilizing dynamic that can run counter to the very values it seeks to enshrine. Thus the “real” Helen is redeemed from the vicissitudes of history only at the cost of fundamental loss of identity, which, in a later stage of the inquiry, is understood as a form of psychological fragmentation and schizophrenia: abuse generates multiple personalities.<sup>57</sup>

Although Doniger does not consider Christian sources in her analysis, it seems clear that the “retellings” of Christ’s passion in patristic literature closely parallel the “retellings” of Homer’s *Iliad* mentioned above. These revisionist tendencies, moreover, are closely intertwined in the *Homily on the*

*Passion and the Cross* which is engaged in a complex transformation of both Homer and the Gospels.<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, the desire to redeem Helen of Troy from the fate to which the inspired poet consigned her corresponds to the efforts of patristic exegetes to eliminate the “shame and folly” of the crucified savior. Like the mythic figures described in Doniger’s work, Christ is both subject to suffering and transcends all suffering; or his sufferings are but a ruse to deceive the devil who, like the simple-minded Paris, falls victim to a conspiracy of signs.

Also outside of Doniger’s survey, but even closer to our patristic sources, is the passion narrative of the god Dionysus, who similarly escaped suffering through divine deception. When the chorus suggests that Pentheus had “bound his hands with coils and chains,” the god declares that “it was then that I scorned him; thinking that he fettered me he neither touched nor grasped me, but fed on fantasy” (Euripides, *Bacchae* 515). For Celsus, the Greek philosopher cited at the beginning of this paper, Christ should have likewise demonstrated his divinity by being transported to heaven at the time of his arrest or, more dramatically, from the summit of the cross.<sup>59</sup> This was precisely the path taken by various Gnostic groups who “solved” the problem of the passion by denying it altogether. Contrary to appearances, Christ did not suffer at all: in his place on the cross was a double (Judas, or Simon of Cyrene, in a mix-up by the Roman bureaucracy), while the “real” Christ stood in the distance laughing.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to these suggestive psychological interpretations, the interpretive practice of “splitting the difference” provided orthodox writers with a popular, apologetical, and dramatic response to the christology of Arianism,<sup>61</sup> the arguments of which were particularly compelling in the context of the passion narrative.<sup>62</sup> In this way, the suffering and death of Christ, which had been culturally and theologically problematic, were rearticulated as a voluntary display of weak-

ness designed to deceive and ultimately defeat the devil, who pays dearly for adopting the “low” christology of the Arians. It was thus not by chance that excerpts from the *Homily on the Passion and the Cross* circulated in anti-Arian christological florilegia, some of them interpolated so as to indict the Arians by name.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, an anti-Arian sermon by the Cappadocian theologian Amphilochius of Iconium (d. after 394), *On the Words*, “Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me” (Matt 26:39), is devoted entirely to the theme of the fish-hook, which the preacher uses to overturn the Arian reading of Matt 26:39.<sup>64</sup> In all of these texts, the Arian inability (or refusal) to recognize the divinity of the incarnate Word is aligned with the demonic failure to perceive the glimmering fish-hook concealed by the suffering of Jesus of Nazareth.

Even more to the point is Gregory of Nyssa’s *Catechetical Discourse*, which should also be situated in an anti-Arian context. Gregory mentions the Arians in chapters 38 and 39, and in the sections dealing with the fish-hook, Gregory addresses himself to those who “ridicule and mock the incarnation.” In a classic anti-Arian move inherited from his brother, Basil of Caesarea (who derived it in turn from Origen), Gregory argues for the unity of the divine attributes in the incarnation. These attributes include goodness, power, justice, and wisdom, and (as noted above) Gregory sees “wisdom” enacted in the cleverness of Sophia-incarnate deceiving the devil with the bait of her trembling flesh. In this way, both the suffering of Christ and the divine status of Wisdom were reclaimed from their Arian detractors, and not only reclaimed, but brought together in a paradoxical unity. Through a poetics of disguise and displacement, the suffering of Christ was carefully positioned between two universes, two temporalities, two modes of signification, vacillating between letter and spirit, surface and depth.<sup>65</sup> And if the surface revealed suffering and shame, it nevertheless concealed a “secret and

hidden wisdom; a wisdom which none of the rulers of this age understood; for if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:7-8).

For Gregory of Nyssa, the incarnation was precisely (and paradoxically) an act of concealment, and concealment, together with the correlative notion of deception, characterizes for him the entire order of redemption. The sources for such a doctrine were found partly in the kenosis hymn of Philippians 2:6-11, in which the deity abandons its divine "form" in order to be reconfigured in the "likeness" of a human being.<sup>66</sup> This was not of course knavish deception, or simply games and dress-up for the purposes of sport and play. Rather, the theater of operations was a war, a fight to the death between cosmic powers, in which deception and concealment were forms of camouflage necessary to elude and outwit the enemy.<sup>67</sup>

As these ideas developed, Philippians 2:7 ("He emptied [ἐκένωσεν] himself and took the form of a servant") was merged with the Song of Songs 1:3 ("Thy name is myrrh poured out" [ἐκκενωθέν]). For Gregory of Nyssa, the "pouring out of the divine name" indicates that God cannot be contained within the brittle flask of human discourse, and can only enter such discourse through a process of dissemblance and misrepresentation.<sup>68</sup> Lack of resemblance, however, did not imply a lack of presence, because the self-emptying of God produced an emptiness of inexhaustible possibility. In Origen's commentary on this verse, which Gregory was familiar with, the Alexandrian exegete noted that: "Unless God had been 'poured out,' and 'took the form of a servant' (cf. Phil 2:6), no one would have been able to grasp the fullness of deity."<sup>69</sup> Elsewhere Origen states that:

That which came into this life emptied itself (ἐκένωσεν ἑαυτὸ) (cf. Phil 2:7), so that through its emptiness (τῷ κενώματι) the world would be filled (πληρωθεῖ). And that very emptiness is Wisdom (αὐτὸ ἐκεῖνο τὸ κένωμα

σοφία ἥν), because the “foolishness of God is wiser than men” (1 Cor 1:25), even though they be the wisest of the “rulers of this age” (1 Cor 2:8).<sup>70</sup>

This very emptiness, Origen says, is Wisdom: a place of passage and not of circumscription, a place of displacement and exchange; a threshold which beckons the natural order toward mystery, the logical order toward equivocation, and the visible order toward dissemblance and the subversion of aspect.<sup>71</sup> The notion of “divine deception” is thus a central corollary of the Word’s encryption in the flesh, the veiling of the unspeakable Name in the deceptive utterances of language.

Despite these sonorous resonances with the mystical silence of apophatic theology, however, the magnificent imposture of the incarnate Word is not merely a symptom of the incapacity of language to represent that which is beyond language, true as that may be. Instead, the feints and falls enacted by the incarnate deity constitute the intentional manipulation of human signs, the seductive scheme of eternal poetic justice.<sup>72</sup> As a conspiracy of signs, divine deception entails the loss of fixed referential principles, collapsing the world into a symbolic, ludic universe which is perhaps best interpreted in terms of play, challenges, duels, and the strategy of appearances. It is a universe that can no longer be interpreted in terms of dominant structures or stable binary oppositions, but rather through seductive reversibility. At the same time, the subject is never the master of his master plan, but must submit to the rules of a game that go beyond it. A ritual dramaturgy beyond the law, seduction is both game and fate, and as such pushes both Christ and Satan to their inevitable end. In a strategy of seduction, one is drawn to the other’s area of weakness. To seduce is to appear weak. To seduce is to render weak. We seduce with our weakness, never with signs of strength or power. In seduction we enact that weakness, and this is what gives seduction its strength. We

seduce with our death, with our vulnerability, and with the void that haunts us. The worm and the fish are involved in a complex exchange, a dizzying spiral of responses and counter-responses in a game that never ends: an endless game that can only end in death. Or so it would seem.

When seen in the seductive light of fourth-century patristic exegesis, the suffering of Jesus was shown to have both concealed and revealed the "wisdom and power of God." And if, in his suffering and death, Jesus became a dehumanized nobody, it was in the rich sense of the emptied flask, which signifies, not non-being, but creativity, life and well-being in the midst of struggle. It marks the place where the suffering Jesus rebounds against failure, forever resilient even when dangling like a bruised worm in the jaws of death. It is the place where every story begins, the place where every story ends, rich with the possibility of another beginning.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Cited by Origen (ca. 185-254), *Contra Celsum* 2.24, ed. Marcel Borret, SC 132 (Paris: Cerf, 1967), 348; trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 88. Origen correctly points out that "no statement is found that Jesus 'uttered wailings,'" and he accuses Celsus of both "altering" the text (of Matt 26:39) and ignoring those passages which "prove that Jesus was ready and courageous in face of his suffering." Origen concedes that a proper discussion of these problems requires the "help of divine wisdom," in support of which he cites 1 Cor 2:7, a text that was central to the developing *theologia crucis*. For

related passages, see *ibid.*, 6.34, ed. Borret, SC 147 (Paris: Cerf, 1969), 262; trans. 350; *ibid.*, 6.36 (ed. 266; trans. 352); and 6.10: "They would have us believe that (Jesus) is the Son of God, although he was most dishonorably arrested and punished to his utter disgrace, and until quite recently wandered about most shamefully in the sight of all men" (ed. 202-204; trans. 324).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Justin Martyr, *Apology* I, 13.4: "They say that our madness (μανία) consists in the fact that we put a crucified man in second place after the unchangeable and eternal God, the creator of the world," ed. Miroslav Marcovich (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 51, lines 15-19; cf. Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), who surveys a large number of passages by early Christian writers dealing with this theme. In the fourth century, the emperor Julian ridiculed Christians for worshipping a "Jewish corpse," *idem, Against the Galileans*, LCL (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1980), 3:376 (206A); cf. 414 (335BC).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Origen, *Commentary on Romans* 4:2 (extant in a Latin translation by Rufinus): "The sign in which Christ had come was a 'sign of contradiction' (Luke 2:34), because one thing was seen in him and something else was understood. Flesh was being seen, but God was being believed" (PG 14.968AB); John Chrysostom, *De coemeterio et de cruce*: "Even though that which is uttered is one, its meaning is two-fold" (εἰ καὶ τὸ λεγόμενον ἓν, ἀλλὰ διπλοῦν τὸ νοούμενον) (said with respect to the passion and crucifixion) (PG 49.395, lines 32-33); and Pseudo-Chrysostom, *In sancta et magna parasceve*: "Today he is bound who bound the waters in clouds, loosing those who were bound and granting freedom to those who were captive. He is bound who unbound Lazarus from the bonds of death. Led as a prisoner to Pilate is he who is escorted by myriads of angels ... therefore do not be ashamed, but look beyond external appearances (τὰ φαινόμενα), and beholding man, worship God" (PG 50.813-16).

<sup>4</sup> Here I am indebted to the work of David Satran, "Pedagogy and Deceit in the Alexandrian Theological Tradition," in *Origeniana Quinta. Papers of the 5th International Origen Congress*, ed. R.J. Daly (Leuven, 1993), 119-24; *idem*, "Truth and Deception in the Contra Celsum," in *Discorsi di Verità: Paganesimo, Giudaismo e Cristianesimo al Confronto nel Contro Celso di Origene*, ed. Lorenzo Perrone (Rome, 1998), 213-24; see also J.W. Trigg, "Divine Deception and the Truthfulness of Scripture," in *Origen of Alexandria: His World and Legacy*, ed. Charles Kannengiesser and W. L. Peterson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 147-64; and E. L. Wheeler, *Stratagem and the Vocabulary of Military Trickery* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 93-100.

<sup>5</sup> A similar argument runs through the work of Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), which deals extensively with lies and deception. The conventional nature of language, the author argues, facilitates lying, and the very "freedom of the sign from the signified enlarges the possibilities for falsehood." The ability to prevaricate is thus a basic "design feature" of language, in support of which Rappaport cites Buber: "A lie was possible only after a creature, man, was capable of conceiving the being of truth" (pp. 11-13).

<sup>6</sup> *Catechetical Discourse* 24, 26, ed. E. Mühlenberg, Gregorii Nysseni Opera 3/4 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 62, lines 3-10, and 65-66, lines 21-25/1-3; reprinted with a French translation, introduction, and notes, by Raymond Winling, SC 453 (Paris: Cerf, 2000), 254-64; cf. L.F. Mateo-Seco, "El concepto de salvación en la 'Oratio Catechetica Magna' de S. Gregorio de Nisa," *ScrTh* 4 (1972): 145-71. Compare the remarks of Gregory's brother Basil, *Hexaemeron* 7.3, for whom the image of a fish caught on a hook is a type of the final retribution for acts of avarice and oppression (ed. Stanislaus Giet, SC 26 [Paris: Cerf, 1968], 404, line 9); and those of Gregory's contemporary and colleague Gregory Nazianzus, *Or. Bas.* 39.3, 13: "The 'light shines in the darkness' (John 1:5) of this life and in this weak flesh, and though persecuted by the darkness, it is not 'overtaken' (John 1:5) by it – I mean by the opposing power which shamelessly assailed the visible (τῷ φαινομένῳ) Adam, but instead encountered God and was defeated ... For since the specious advocate (σοφιστής) of evil baited us with the promise of divinity (cf. Gen 3:6), he was himself baited by the snare (πρόβλημα) of the flesh. In attacking (the new) Adam, he encountered God, and the condemnation of the flesh was abolished (cf. Rom 5:16, 18), death being put to death by the flesh" (ed. C. Moreschini and P. Gallay, SC 358 [Paris: Cerf, 1990], 152, lines 9-13; 178, lines 22-27); cf. *ibid.*, 30.6 (p. 236); *Or.* 40.10 (ed. Moreschini and Gallay, SC 358, p. 216); and John Egan, "The Deceit of the Devil according to Gregory Nazianzus," *St Pat* 22 (1989): 8-13, who deals extensively with this passage.

<sup>7</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Three-Day Period between the Death and Resurrection of Christ*, ed. E. Gebhardt, GNO 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 280-81, lines 16-18/4-16; cf. the detailed commentary on this passage by Hubertus R. Drobner, *Gregor von Nyssa. Die Drei Tage zwischen Tod und Auferstehung unseres Herrn J.C.* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 86-91; and the remarks of Mariette Canévet, "Nature du mal et économie du salut chez Grégoire de Nysse," *RSR* 56 (1968): 87-95; and Andreas Spira, "Der descensus ad Infernos in der Osterpredigt Gregors von Nyssa De Tridui Spatio," in *The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. A. Spira



(Cambridge, Mass.: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1981), 195-261, esp. 230-38.

<sup>8</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 1: "The wisdom of Solomon has no measure or limit (ἀόριστος) ... but do not suppose that I mean the same Solomon from Bersabee. Another Solomon is signified here, one who is also descended from David according to the flesh. This one comprehends the knowledge (γνώσις) of all things. His very being (τὸ εἶναι) is Wisdom," ed. H. Langerbeck, GNO 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 17, lines 1-6. See also Origen, *On First Principles* 1.2, on "Wisdom" as the true being of Christ, ed. Henri Crouzel and Manlio Simonetti, SC 252 (Paris: Cerf, 1978), 126; and idem, *Commentary on John*, I.289, where Prov 8:22 is used to subordinate the "Logos" (of John 1:1) to "Wisdom," because "Wisdom precedes the word that announces it," ed. Cécile Blanc, SC 120 (Paris: Cerf, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> Hastings Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement* (London: Macmillan, 1925), 364.

<sup>10</sup> J.A. MacCullough, *The Harrowing of Hell: A Comparative Study of an Early Christian Doctrine* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1930), 205, who also has in view the larger question of the "devil's rights" over fallen humanity.

<sup>11</sup> Christus Victor. *An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement* (New York: Macmillan, 1986 [1931]), 47.

<sup>12</sup> George Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century* (Belmont, MA: Notable and Academic Books, 1987 [1933]), 195, cited approvingly by Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 272-73.

<sup>13</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. 2: *Human Destiny* (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1941), 59-60.

<sup>14</sup> Cyril Richardson in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward R. Hardy (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 247.

<sup>15</sup> Frances Young, *The Use of Sacrificial Ideas in Greek Christian Writers from the New Testament to John Chrysostom* (Cambridge, Mass.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 209; and idem, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 121.

<sup>16</sup> Anthony Meredith, *The Cappadocians* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 94.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Jakob Kees, *Die Lehre von der Oikonomia Gottes in der Oratio Catechetica Gregors von Nyssa* (Leiden: Brill, 1995). An exception is the work of Franz Hilt, *Des heil. Gregor von Nyssa Lehre vom Menschen systematisch dargestellt von* (Köln, 1890), 144-50, who recognized the importance of this theme in Gregory's soteriology; see also the remarks

of Hübner, below, n. 52, who builds on Hilt's work, describing Gregory's metaphor of the fish-hook as "ein zentrales Theologumenon seiner Soteriologie."

<sup>18</sup> Athanasius (below, n. 37); Chrysostom, *Homily on Matthew 26:39* (PG 61.753); John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei* 45.3.1 (ed. Boniface Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 2 [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1973], 106-107); for further references, cf. Drobner, *Die Drei Tage*, 89, n. 103. Note that the fish-hook also appears in the liturgical texts of the Orthodox Church: "With divinely-wise bait thou didst hook the author of evil, the dragon of the deep, binding him in Tartarus with bonds of darkness," *Pentecostarion* (Boston: Holy Transfiguration, 1990), 423. Given the continuity between the flesh of Christ and Mary, Pseudo-Epiphanius praises the Virgin as the "bait of the spiritual fish-hook, for in you the divinity is the hook" (Homily 5; PG 43.489D); cf. idem, Homily 4, where the devil says: "I was deceived by the son of Mary, not knowing that God had concealed himself (κρύπτεται) in a human body; I beheld him enfolded (περικείμενον) in a human body, and I mistook him for a mere man (ἄνθρωπον αὐτὸν νομίσας ψιλόν)" (PG 43.481CD).

<sup>19</sup> Daniel J. Saunders, "The Devil and the Divinity of Christ," *Theological Studies* 9 (1948): 536-53, provides an incisive survey of this theme from Augustine through Aquinas and Cajetan.

<sup>20</sup> Augustine, Sermon 130: "Along came the redeemer and conquered the deceiver. And what did our redeemer do to our captor? To pay our price, he set the mousetrap of his cross; as bait he placed there his own blood. While the devil, though, was able to shed that blood, he did not earn the right to drink it. And because he shed the blood of one who was not his debtor, he was ordered to release those who were his debtors" (PL 38.726-27), trans. Edmund Hill, *The Works of Augustine: Sermons III/4* (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1992), 311, who notes that this is "one of Augustine's favorite, and more grotesque metaphors for explaining how Christ's death has delivered us from the devil's clutches." Peter Lombard quotes the sermon in his *Sententia in Libris Distinctae* (Rome, 1971-81), 2:120; cf. J. Rivière, "Muscipula Diaboli: Origène et sens d'une image augustinienne," *Théologie ancienne et médiévale* 1 (1929): 484-96; and Meyer Schapiro, "Muscipula Diaboli: The Symbolism of the Mérode Altarpiece," *Art Bulletin* 28 (1945): 81-89. See also C.W. Marx, *The Devil's Rights and the Redemption in the Literature of Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, and Rochester, NY, 1995); and Kathleen M. Ashley, "The Guiler Beguiled: Christ and Satan as Theological Tricksters in Medieval Religious Literature," *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts* 24.2 (1982): 126-37.

<sup>21</sup> Job 40.20-41.25: "But wilt thou catch the dragon (δράκων) with a fish-hook (ἄγκιστρον) and put a halter about his nose? Or wilt thou fasten a ring in his nostril, and bore his lip with a clasp? ... But thou shalt lay thy hand upon him once, remembering the war that is waged by his mouth ... There is nothing upon the earth like him, formed to be sported with (ἐγκαταπαίζεσθαι) by my angels. He beholds every high thing, and he is king of all that are in the waters." Ps 103(104):26: "This dragon whom thou hast made to sport (ἐμπαίζειν) in it (i.e., in the sea)." Isa 27:1: "In that day God shall bring his holy and great and strong sword upon the dragon, even the serpent that flees, upon the dragon, the crooked serpent: he shall destroy the dragon."

<sup>22</sup> Matt 27:46, citing Ps 21(22):1: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Note that the Gospel of Luke, written with the sensibilities of a Greco-Roman audience in mind, omits the indecorous cry of dereliction.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Pseudo-Chrysostom, In ilud, simile est regnum coelorum grans sinapis (Matt 13:31): "What does Isaiah say? 'We saw him, but he had no form nor beauty, but his form was ignoble' (Isa 53:2-3), and this is why he called himself a 'worm,' for he says, 'I am a worm and not a man' (Ps 21[22]:6), and in Isaiah the Father says to him: 'Fear not, you worm Jacob' (Isa 41:14), and afterwards, calling to mind his burial, he says, 'Thy inheritance (κατάλειμμα [sic]; LXX = κατακάλλυμα) shall be with the worm' (Isa 14:11), for just like a wise fisherman, it was necessary that he place his flesh like a worm on the brilliantly shining fish-hook of his divinity, and cast it into the depths of this world, and thus catch the dragon on a hook, so that what was written in Job might come to pass, 'Thou wilt catch the dragon with a fish hook' (Job 40.25)" (PG 64.23, lines 20-32). See also Proclus of Constantinople (d. 446), Homily 29.24, 26: "Christ carried the cross in order to fish out Adam from Tartarus... why do you plot in vain, O devil? Christ carries a cross which you fashioned to your own ruin, for as a wise fisherman he carries the cross in place of a pole in order to fish out Adam from Tartarus" (ed. F. J. Leroy, L'Homilétique de Proclus de Constantinople [Rome, 1967], 211).

<sup>24</sup> On the dynamics of which, see James L. Kugel, In Potiphar's House: *The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), esp. 247-70.

<sup>25</sup> Barsanuphius, ep. 62, ed. François Neyt and Paula de Angelis-Noah, SC 426 (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 1:308-10. I am thankful to His Grace Bishop Savas Zembillas of Troas who kindly provided me with this reference, along with the English translation from his unpublished manuscript.

<sup>26</sup> On the *Celestial Hierarchy* 2.5, ed. Günter Heil and Adolf Martin Ritter, *Corpus Dionysiacum*, II (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), 15, line

20. For Dionysius' concept of "dissimilarity" (ἀνομοιότης) the editors provide a cross reference to Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium I*, 620-23; and II, 234-28. For the passage from Letter 3, cf. Heil and Ritter, *ibid.*, 159: κρυφίως δέ ἐστι καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἐκφάνσιν ἢ, ἵνα τὸ θεϊότερον εἶπω, καὶ ἐν τῇ ἐκφάνσει καὶ τοῦτο γὰρ Ἰησοῦ κέκρυπται καὶ οὐδενὶ λόγῳ οὔτε νόῳ τὸ κατ' αὐτὸν ἐξηκεται μυστήριον, ἀλλὰ καὶ λεγόμενον ἄρρητον μένει, καὶ νοούμενον ἄγνωστον.

<sup>27</sup> The Greek text of the Homily can be found in PG 28.185-250 (CPG 2247). On the attribution, see Hubertus R. Drobner, "Eine Pseudo-Athanasianische Osterpredigt über die Wahrheit Gottes und ihre Erfüllung," in *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy in Late Antiquity. Essays in Tribute to George Christopher Stead*, Lionel R. Wickham, et al., eds. (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 43-44, who surveys the scholarship on this question. Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the sermon has been variously attributed to Athanasius (d. 373); Eustathius of Antioch (d. ca. 345); Marcellus of Ancyra (d. ca. 374); Didymus of Alexandria (d. 398); and to an anonymous Palestinian writer of the mid 4<sup>th</sup> century. On the basis of internal evidence, Drobner dates the text to some time before 350. The text is also extant in Syriac and Armenian versions: cf. R. W. Thompson, *Athanasiana Syriaca* III, CSCO 324 (1972), 89-138 (text); CSCO 325 (1972), 61-96 (trans.); R. P. Casey, "Armenian Manuscripts of St. Athanasius of Alexandria," HTR 24 (1931): 43-59.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Pseudo-Chrysostom, *De confessione pretiosae crucis* (PG 52.841-44), which deals extensively with this same theme.

<sup>29</sup> The fourth-century Arians argued that Christ's temptation on the mountain was a scriptural proof against his divinity, cf. Athanasius, *Oratio contra Arianos* 3.56-57 (PG 26.440B-441C), who in this context does not invoke the theory of divine deception, but cf. below, n. 30.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Origen, *Commentary on Romans* 5.10: "There was a just and noble king, who was waging a war against an unjust tyrant, but trying to avoid a violent and bloody conflict, because some of his own men were fighting on the tyrant's side, and he wanted to free them, not destroy them. He therefore adopted the uniform of the tyrant's men, until he managed to persuade them to desert and to return to their proper kingdom, and succeeded in 'binding the strong man' in fetters, destroying his 'principalities and powers,' and carrying off those he held captive" (PG 14.1051C-52A); and Athanasius, *Oratio contra Arianos*, 2.52: "As if a son, when the servants were lost, and in the hands of the enemy...were sent by his father to recover them, and upon setting out were to clothe himself in a garment resembling theirs, and disguise himself as one of them (ἐπενδιδύσκοιτο τὴν ὁμοίαν ἐκείνων ἐσθῆτα, καὶ σχηματίζει αὐτὸν ὡς ἐκεῖνοι), lest the enemy, recognizing him as the master,

should take flight and prevent his descending to those who were hidden under the earth" (PG 26.257AB).

<sup>31</sup> A form of deception discussed in the Lesser Hippias: the better wrestler is one who falls purposely than one who falls because he cannot help it (374ab); cf. Dionysius the Areopagite, *On Divine Names* 8.6: "That sophist (i.e., Elymas the Magician, cf. Acts 13:8) imitates inexperienced wrestlers, who, assuming that their adversaries are weak (ἀσθενεῖς), and manfully making a show of fight with them when absent, courageously box into the air with empty blows, and think they have overcome their opponents, not yet having experienced their rival's strength (δύναμις)," ed. Beata Regina Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum* I (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 203, lines 17-22.

<sup>32</sup> On the symbolic function of Irus in Homer's epic, see Daniel Levine, "Odyssey 18: Irus as a Paradigm for the Suitors," *Classical Journal* 77 (1982): 200-201.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, 5.6-7: "The entire experience put the enemy to shame (πρὸς αἰσχύνην). Indeed, he who had thought he was like to God, was here made a fool by a stripling of a man (ὕπὸ νεανίσκου νῦν ἐπαίζετο). He who in his conceit disdained flesh and blood, was now routed (ἀνατρέπετο) by a man in the flesh," ed. G.J.M. Bartelink, SC 400 (Paris: Cerf, 1994), 144, lines 35-40; cf. *ibid.*, 41.3-5, where the devil says: ἐγὼ γὰρ ἀσθενὴς γέγονα ... οὐκέτι τόπον ἔχω ... ὁ γὰρ Χριστὸς ἐλθὼν ἀσθενῇ σε πεποίηκε καὶ καταβαλὼν ἐγύμνωσεν (246, lines 10-19).

<sup>34</sup> Parallels between Christ and Odysseus were not uncommon in Christian antiquity, although they were not normally introduced into sermons on the passion; cf. Jean Pépin, "The Platonic and Christian Ulysses," in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. Dominic J. O'Meara (Albany, 1982), 3-18; Philip Sellew, "Achilles or Christ? Porphyry and Didymus in Debate over Allegorical Interpretation," *HTR* 82 (1989): 79-100; Dennis Ronald MacDonald, "Homer in the Early Church," in *idem*, *Christianizing Homer: The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew* (Oxford, 1994), 17-34; and J. Daniélou, "Homer in the Fathers of the Church," in *idem*, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, trans. John Austin Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 75-105. That both Odysseus and Christ suffered provided the basic point of comparison, cf. Sophocles, frg. 880N: "In the eyes of men I am truly what my name 'Odysseus' means, for the impious in large numbers have made me 'suffer' (ὠδύσαντο)."

<sup>35</sup> The language of "weakness" and "strength" is derived from 2 Cor 13:4: "If he was crucified in weakness (ἀσθένεια), he lives by the power (δύναμις) of God," cf. Luke 22:43.

<sup>36</sup> On which see K. Roddy, "Politics and Religion: The Roman Imperial Adventus Ceremony and the Christian Myth of the Harrowing of Hell," *Apocrypha* 11 (2000): 123-45. Note that the Homily on the Passion is contemporary with the iconography of the "Christus Victor," in which Christ is shown alive and dispassionate on the cross, cf. John R. Martin, "The Dead Christ on the Cross in Byzantine Art," in *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.*, ed. K. Weitzmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955); and Anna Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton, 1986), 33-68, 99.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, 24.4-5: "He [the devil] overlooks how he was dragged around with a hook (ἀγκίστῳ) like a dragon by the savior, haltered around his snout like a beast of burden, and had his nostrils ringed like a runaway, and his lips pierced through by an iron band" (ed. Bartelink, 202, lines 23-2).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 5.3: "The enemy saw that he was powerless in the face of Antony's determination and that it was rather he who was being bested (μᾶλλον ἑαυτὸν καταπαλαιόμενον) because of the man's steadfastness and vanquished (ἀνατρεπτόμενον) by his solid faith and routed by Antony's constant prayer" (ed. 142, lines 13-16).

<sup>39</sup> Origen, *Homily 8.6 on Joshua*, ed. Annie Jaubert, SC 71 (Paris: Cerf, 1960), 232-34; the translation is from Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Origen: Spirit and Fire*, trans. Robert J. Daly (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1984), 131. On the patristic exegesis of Col 2:14-15, see Michael E. Stone, *Adam's Contract with Satan: The Legend of the Cheirograph of Adam* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002).

<sup>40</sup> Romanos, *On the Victory of the Cross*, ed. P. Maas and C. A. Trypanis, *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica: Cantica Genuina* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 165; cf. Pseudo-Chrysostom, *In adorationem venerandae crucis*: "Seeing these things, the devil cried, 'Who has plunged a nail into my heart? A wooden lance has pierced me, and I am torn to pieces ... being defeated by the one whom I thought I had defeated'" (PG 62.748, lines 23-29). Romanos' poem appears to have been the inspiration for the 10<sup>th</sup>-century ivory panel of the crucifixion now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in which the "base of the cross pierces the stomach of the reclining figure of Hades...transform[ing] the crucifixion into a celebration of the Triumph of the Cross," cf. Charles T. Little, "Triptych Panel with Crucifixion," in *The Glory of Byzantium*, ed. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom (New York, 1997), 151-52; and Margaret E. Frazer, "Hades Stabbed by the Cross of Christ," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 9 (1974): 153-61.

<sup>41</sup> Pseudo-Chrysostom, *In sancta et magna parasceve* (PG 62.722D).

<sup>42</sup> J. K. Elliot, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 187; cf. *The Acts of Thomas* 45: "We [demons] believed we could bring him under our yoke like the rest, but he turned and held us in his grip. For we did not know him: he deceived us by his despicable form, by his poverty and indigence. When we looked upon him as such, we believed him to be a man bearing flesh, not knowing him to be the one who gave life to mankind," ed. Max Bonnet (Leipzig: H. Mendelssohn, 1883), 162. I am thankful to Daniel Caner for this reference.

<sup>43</sup> As Nyssa himself suggests: "Two persons may both mix poison (τὸ φάρμακον) with food, one with the design of taking life, the other with the design of saving that life; the one using it as poison, the other as an antidote to poison," *Catechetical Discourse* 26 (ed. Mühlenberg, 65, lines 13-16).

<sup>44</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *Quaestiones aliae* 20 (PG 28.793CD).

<sup>45</sup> The doctrinal formula promulgated by the Council of Chalcedon (451) states that Christ was composed of "two natures" in "one person and one hypostasis" (ἐν δύο φύσεσιν ... καὶ εἰς ἓν πρόσωπον καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν) (ACO II,1, p. 129, lines 30-33).

<sup>46</sup> Nyssa deals with Matt 26:39 in his *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarium*, ed. F. Müller, GNO 3/1 (Leiden: Brill, 1958), 181; cf. Gregory Nazianzus, Or. 30.12, ed. Paul Gallay, SC 250 (Paris: Cerf, 1978), 248-52; and below, n. 64.

<sup>47</sup> *Catechetical Discourse* 21 (ed. Mühlenberg, 56, lines 13-24); cf. idem, *Life of Moses* 297: "Pleasure is truly like evil's bait (δέλεα); when it is cast out (προβληθεῖσα) lightly, it draws gluttonous souls to the fish-hook (ἄγκιστρον) of destruction," ed. J. Daniélou, SC 1 (Paris: Cerf, 2000), 308.

<sup>48</sup> *Catechetical Discourse* 23 (ed. Mühlenberg, 60, lines 8-13/21-23).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. ibid. 6: "Concerning all existing things there is a two-fold manner of apprehension (διπλή τις κατανόησις) inasmuch as they are divided between what pertains to the intellect and what to the senses, and there is nothing in the natural order extending beyond this division" (ed. Mühlenberg, 21, lines 7-10). As for the "movement" of created being, Nyssa notes (ibid., 21), that it likewise has "two forms" (δύο εἶδη κινήσεως), one oriented toward the "goodness of divine infinity" (τὸ μὲν πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν αἰεὶ γινόμενον ἐν ᾧ ἡ πρόοδος στάσιν οὐκ ἔχει), and the other into the "nullity of non-being" (τὸ δὲ πρὸς τὸ ἐναντίον οὐ ἡ ὑπόστασις ἐν τῷ μὴ ὑφ'εστάναι ἐστιν) (ed. 55-56, lines 23-24/1-2). For a study of Nyssa's use of these categories, see Alden A. Moss-hammer, "Gregory of Nyssa and Christian Hellenism," *St Pat* 32 (1997): 136-67.

<sup>50</sup> Discussed in Catechetical Discourse 7, 21 (ed. Mühlenberg, 26-28, 55-60). See also Werner Beierwaltes, "The Love of Beauty and the Love of God," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, ed. A.H. Armstrong (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 293, who notes that "in contrast to modern consciousness, the concept of beauty or the beautiful does not have primarily an aesthetic significance but, above all, an ethical one. The beautiful is the manifestation or outward expression of the Good, an indication that a certain form or being or existence has attained its purpose or perfection or that it is perfection itself."

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 15: "Like a good teacher he came down to their level ... He took to himself a body and moved as a man among men, drawing to himself the senses of all men (τὰς αἰσθήσεις πάντων ἀνθρώπων προσλαμβάνει), so that those who were seeking God in sensible things might apprehend the Father through the works he did in the body," ed. Charles Kannengiesser, SC 199 (Paris: Cerf, 2000), 318.

<sup>52</sup> The analogy of the eclipse is from the *De hominis opificio* 21.3 (PG 44.201D); cf. *Catechetical Discourse* 6: οὐδὲν τινα σκιά τῇ ἀναχωρήσει τῆς ἀκτίνος ἐπισυμβαίνουσιν (ed. Mühlenberg, 23-24, lines 25/1); and *ibid.*, 22, for the devil's acknowledgement (ed. 66-67). Reinhard M. Hübner, *Die Einheit des Leibes Christi bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 95-167, similarly suggests that the interaction of the "worm and the fish" signifies a union of opposed forces in the reintegration of a former fullness; cf. Alden A. Mosshammer, "Non-Being and Evil in Gregory of Nyssa," *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 (1990): 136-67.

<sup>53</sup> Athanasius, *Oratio contra Arianos* 3.29: "The scope and character of scripture is this: it contains a double account (διπλὴ ἐπαγγελία) of the savior, i.e., that he was ever God, the Son, being the Father's 'Word' (John 1:1), and 'Radiance' (Heb 1:3), and 'Wisdom' (1 Cor 1:24), and that afterwards he took flesh from the Virgin Theotokos and was made man" (PG 26.383, lines 8-14); and Gregory Nazianzus, *Or.* 29.18: "You must ascribe the more exalted expressions (i.e., of scripture) to the deity, and the lowlier ones to the compound of him who because of you 'was emptied' (Phil 2:7), and became man," ed. Paul Gallay, SC (Paris: Cerf, 1978), 216, lines 21-24.

<sup>54</sup> (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999). *The Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1996-1997.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-42.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-38, 58, 111.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-87.



<sup>58</sup> Cf. above, n. 34, and Mosshammer, "Nyssa and Christian Hellenism," who deals with Nyssa's interpretation of the Homeric myth of Circe (Odyssey 8).

<sup>59</sup> Cited in Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2.68: "But if he really was so great he ought, in order to display his divinity, to have disappeared suddenly from the cross (ἀπὸ τοῦ σκόλοπος εὐθύς ἀφανῆς γενέσθαι)" (ed. Borret, 444; trans. 118); cf. above, n. 1.

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, Elaine Pagels, "Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ's Passion: Paradigms for the Christian Response to Persecution?" in *Rediscovery of Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 262-88, whose emphasis on persecution bears comparison with Doniger's focus on dissociation (and narrative doubling) as a response to abuse and trauma.

<sup>61</sup> Drobner, *Die drei Tage*, 89, notes that, "im 4. Jahrhundert hat das Motiv der Überlutung des Teufels jedoch zusätzlich eine spezielle dogmatische Bedeutung für die arianische Theologie und deren Abwehr." On the dramatic and theatrical associations, see Judit Kecskeméti, "Doctrine et drame dans la prédication grecque," *Euphrosyne* 21 (1993): 29-67, who argues that Amphilocius of Iconium and Severian of Gabala introduced the form of the dramatic homily, which distinguishes between the suffering humanity and the impassible divinity, precisely as a polemic against the Arians and Apollinarians.

<sup>62</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 3.3.31: "It is clear that the reason why Eunomius sets the Father above the Son and exalts him with supreme honor is this: that the shame of the cross is not seen in the Father" (ed. W. Jaeger, GNO 2 [Leiden: Brill, 1960], 118-19, lines 25-28/1-4). Eunomius, *Apology for the Apology*: "The deity of the Son suffers, while that of the Father is preserved in absolute apatheia. Therefore, the nature that is characterized by apatheia is essentially different from the nature that admits suffering" (Gregory of Nyssa, *Eunomius* 3.4.5 [ibid., 135, lines 15-19]); and ibid., "The Father's nature remained in pure apatheia and could not admit of suffering, while the Son, by reason of the divergence of his nature by way of humiliation, was not incapable of experiencing the flesh and death, proof, that is, of the Son's otherness in nature from the Father" (Gregory of Nyssa, *Eunomius* 3.3.38 [ibid., 120-21, lines 29/1-5]).

<sup>63</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, *Homily on the Passion and the Cross* (interpolated fragment): "When the Lord was hanging upon the cross (for his was the body in which was the Word), the sun was darkened and 'many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep arose' (cf. Matt 27:52), yet no one has ever dared (τολμῶσι), as now do the Arians, to doubt that the Word was made flesh" (PG 28.249 = PG 28.233A, lines 10-13, and 229A, lines 8-12).

<sup>64</sup> "There are those who say that Christ was afraid and acted cowardly in the face of death, causing the heretics to ridicule and mock the passion ... Now Eunomius rejoices and Arius is gladdened, having seized upon this text as a pretext for their blasphemy," ed. C. Datema, *Amphilochii Iconiensis Opera* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978), 139, lines 12-13; 140, lines 34-35. The fish-hook (ἄγκιστρον) appears no less than 5 times in this sermon (lines 243, 244, 246, 249, 251); cf. idem, Or. 7.5 (ed. 161, lines 167-71). See also Pseudo-Chrysostom, *In illud, Pater si possibile est* (assigned by its lemma to Holy Friday): "Many, failing to grasp the aim of wisdom, and overlooking the treasure hidden within the literal meaning, ascribe fear and cowardice to Christ (i.e., in the garden of Gethsemane)...but let not Eunomius, that giant of blasphemy, be exalted, for the heretics attack us saying: 'Do you see his fear and cowardice? Do you see how he prays to the Father?' And with this, Eunomius rejoices, and Arius is filled with glee...but it was not as you suppose, O Arius, for those words were but bait for the devil, and like a wise fisherman he says: 'I baited him (τεχνάσασθαι) with cowardice. For if the devil deceived (ἐτεχνάσατο) Adam in the beginning, how much more should I use deception for the salvation of all? With cunning words he deceived (ἡπάτησε) Adam, and now with divine words the cunning one himself shall be deceived (ἀπατηθήσεται). For if a fisherman, having cast his hook into the sea, does not let it out, and then reel it in, making the worm appear to retreat, the fish will not be attracted to it, and thus I concealed (κεκρυμμένον) the fish-hook of my divinity with the worm of my body, casting both into the sea of the world'" (PG 61.751-53).

<sup>65</sup> Here one may profitably consult the rich literature surrounding this theme in Homeric studies. See, for example, Sheila Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey* (Princeton, 1987); Stewart Douglas, *The Disguised Guest: Rank, Role, and Identity in the Odyssey* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1976); Ann Bergren, "Odyssean Temporality: Many (Re)turns," in *Approaches to Homer*, ed. Carl Rubino and Cynthia Shelmerdine (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 38-73.

<sup>66</sup> Phil. 2.6-11: "Though he was in the form (μορφή) of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself (ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν), taking the form (μορφή) of a servant, being born in the likeness (ἐν ὁμοιώματι) of human beings. And being found in human form (σχήματι) he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." For a study of this verse with emphasis on the notions of concealment and deception, see Gerald Bostock, "Origen's Exegesis of the Kenosis Hymn (Philippians 2:5-11)," in *Origeniana Sexta: Origène et la Bible*, ed. Giles Dorival and Alain Le Boulluc (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995), 531-47. See also Raoul

Mortley, *From Word to Silence II: The Way of Negation, Christian and Greek* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1986), 38-40, for a discussion of Clement's view of language as concealment.

<sup>67</sup> Here one is reminded of Churchill's remark: "In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies," cited in the *New York Times*, September 23, 2001; cf. n. 30 above.

<sup>68</sup> Commentary on the Song of Songs, Homily 1, ed. H. Langerbeck, GNO 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 36-37. Note that modern commentators generally read the Commentary as work of "mysticism," failing to recognize that it is a sustained refutation of Eunomianism (evidenced in Nyssa's exegesis of the verse cited above); cf. Homilies 3 (ed. 86-87); 5 (157-58); 6 (181-83); 11 (336-37); and 12 (356-58).

<sup>69</sup> *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 1.4, ed. W.A. Baehrens, GCS (Leipzig, 1925), 102; cf. Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium*, 3.3.67: "The divinity is 'emptied out' (κενοῦται), so that it can be contained (χωρητῆ) by human nature," ed. Werner Jaeger, GNO 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 131, lines 19-20.

<sup>70</sup> *Homily 8.8 on Jeremiah*, ed. P. Nautin and P. Hudson, SC 232 (Paris: Cerf, 1976), 372, lines 1-5; for an English translation, see John Clark Smith, *Origen: Homilies on Jeremiah; Homily on 1 Kings 28*, Fathers of the Church 97 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 74-84.

<sup>71</sup> On Origen's doctrine of divine deception, see Henri de Lubac, "Tu m'as trompé, Seigneur." Le commentaire d'Origène sur Jérémie 20,7," in *Recherches dans la Foi* (Paris, 1979), 9-78; A.M. Castagno, *Origene predicatore e il suo pubblico* (Milan, 1987), 226-32 (= "L'utilità dell' ἀπάτη); J.W. Trigg, "Divine Deception and the Truthfulness of Scripture," in *Origen of Alexandria: His World and Legacy*, ed. C. Kannengiesser and W.L. Petersen (Notre Dame, 1988), 147-64; and John McGuckin, "The Changing Forms of Jesus," in *Origeniana Quarta*, ed. Lothar Lies (Innsbruck: Tyrolia Verlag, 1987), 215-22. I am thankful to David Satran for these references.

<sup>72</sup> This point is argued by Trigg, "Divine Deception," 152-54, who corrects the earlier assessment by Crouzel (cited above, n. 71). See also J.J.M. Roberts, "Does God Lie? Divine Deceit as a Theological Problem in Israelite Prophetic Literature," *Vetus Testamentum* 40 (1986): 211-20.

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**The Rhetorical Situation, Arrangement, and  
Argumentation of 1 Corinthians 8:1-13:  
Insights into Paul's Instructions on Idol-Food in  
Greco-Roman Context**

JOHN FOTOPOULOS

Numerous scholarly works have been recently published which apply rhetorical-criticism to Paul's instructions addressing food offered to idols to 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1.<sup>1</sup> However, scholars have not agreed on the contexts for idol-food consumption that Paul has in view, nor have they agreed on the coherence of Paul's instructions. Paul mentions several situations in which food offered to idols was encountered by the Christians of Roman Corinth in 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1: (a) in a pagan temple precinct (ἐν εἰδωλείῳ, 8:1-13); (b) at the table of pagan gods (τράπεζα δαιμονίων, 10:14-22); (c) at a meal attended by invitation which a pagan was hosting (εἴ τις καλεῖ ὑμᾶς τῶν ἀπίστων, 10:27-11:1); and (d) in the *macellum*/market (ἐν μακέλλῳ, 10:25). Paul devotes three full chapters in 1 Corinthians to these various social-rhetorical situations in which idol-food was encountered in Corinth while addressing the Corinthians' past behavior, his own behavior, and also providing instructions regarding future dining practices. However, a fundamental interpretative difficulty presented by 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1 is the seemingly inconsistent instructions given by Paul regarding idol-food consumption and the various situations in which this idol-food was encountered. Paul prohibits the Corinthian Christians from eating food offered to idols in

pagan temples (8:9-13) and prohibits them from eating at the table of pagan gods (10:14-22). On the other hand, he seems to contradict himself by permitting the Corinthians to eat food that is served to them by pagans when they are invited to formal meals, provided that the Christian diner does not know that sacrificial food is being served (10:27-30). Paul's instructions are further complicated by his allowance of sacrificial food consumption when it has been purchased from the *macellum*, a practice which he supports by citing Psalm 24:1, "the earth and its fullness are the Lord's" (1 Cor 10:25-26). These apparent contradictions in Paul's instructions regarding the Corinthian Christian idol-food dispute and the locations in which idol-food was eaten in Roman Corinth can be satisfactorily resolved by the application of ancient Greek and Roman rhetorical theory to 1 Corinthians 8:1-13.

### Past Scholarly Approaches

Numerous scholars who engage in detailed study of Paul's instructions on food offered to idols in 1 Corinthians have not agreed on numerous social-rhetorical issues that arise when conducting their exegesis. However, these social-rhetorical issues are of paramount importance for a coherent interpretation of Paul's seemingly contradictory statements and instructions. Some exegetes who have not been able to reconcile the apparent contradictions evident throughout 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1 have created elaborate partition theories for 1 Corinthians, treating it as a composite document consisting of numerous letters or letter fragments written on different occasions thus accounting for 1 Corinthians's alleged incoherence regarding idol-food.<sup>2</sup> Other modern scholars have argued that Paul vacillated in 8:1-11:1 from his earlier missionary teaching in Corinth in which he initially regarded idol-food as an *adiaphoron*, changing from his earlier teaching only because of

pressure imposed on him by the Jerusalem leaders and the newly issued Apostolic Decree (Acts 15).<sup>3</sup> Other exegetes have argued that in 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1 Paul agrees with the Corinthians' theological opinions regarding the propriety of idol-food consumption as a persuasive strategy in order to later qualify these views in his argumentation.<sup>4</sup> Finally, additional scholars have simply concluded that Paul was inconsistent in the formulation of his written instructions.<sup>5</sup>

A hermeneutical presupposition that lies beneath some of the scholarly solutions to the apparent contradictions in Paul's idol-food instructions is the assumption that Paul's "Law-free gospel" advocated a Gentile Christian lifestyle completely devoid of Torah observance. Thus, it is asserted, because Paul did not mandate Torah observance for his Gentile Christian converts, the Law's behavioral regulations, including that of *kashrut* (food purity laws) did not apply and, therefore, idol-food consumption was an *adiaphoron* that was never prohibited in Paul's *kerygma* when he first converted the Corinthian Christians.<sup>6</sup> But this is a misinterpretation of Paul's gospel message<sup>7</sup> and a miscategorization of the Israelite idol-food prohibition as *kashrut*. The Israelite idol-food prohibition is not simply a matter of *kashrut*, but is related to the Torah's prohibition of idolatry (Exod 34:13-16; Num 25:2-5). Regarding Paul's gospel message, it certainly did advocate universal salvation in Christ apart from works of the Law (e.g. Gal 2:15-21, 3:10-14, 3:23-29; Rom 1:16-17, 3:21-31). This means that because of Christ's death and resurrection a person's right relationship with God apart from sin is made possible by God's grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Membership in the people of God, therefore, does not come about by entrance into the ethnic Israel appropriated by circumcision, nor is it maintained by Torah observance. Rather, membership into the people of God is open

to everyone by entrance into the spiritual body of Christ on the same basis: by God's grace through faith in Christ Jesus appropriated by baptism and maintained by life in the Spirit.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, despite Paul's universalizing Torah-free understanding of salvation, the apostle did not completely abandon many of the Law's precepts which were spiritually subsumed by the Law of Christ (1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2). Paul advocated many such Christified Torah precepts in his preaching, such as monotheism (Deut 6:3, now reinterpreted to include Christ and the Spirit, as in 2 Cor 13:13); love of neighbor (Lev 19:18, as in Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:13-14); the prohibition of theft (Deut 5:19, as in 1 Cor 6:10); the prohibition of sexual immorality (Num 14:33, as in 1 Cor 6:13; Gal 5:19); and the prohibition of idol-food consumption (Exod 34:15, as in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1). D. Boyarin, commenting on Paul's spiritual-allegorical interpretation of the Torah in the body of Christ over against the carnal-literal interpretation of Israelite tradition, writes that the "Law understood spiritually remains the ethical foundation of the new Israel, just as the Law understood carnally was the ethical foundation for the old."<sup>9</sup>

Thus, once Paul's Law-free gospel is understood properly, that is without the putative Pauline repudiation of every behavioral regulation of Torah as a simplistic *a priori* assumption of Paul's missionary teaching, proper interpretation of the apostle's position on idol-food consumption should not begin with the premise that "All things are permissible." Rather, Paul's position on idol-food functions as a Christified Torah precept prohibiting sacrificial food consumption as idolatry because of the exclusive Christian devotion due to God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit. With this appropriate hermeneutical starting point Paul's supposed allowance of known idol-food consumption, whether in his initial missionary



teaching or in his instructions of 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1, is untenable. Thus, we turn to the application of rhetorical-criticism to elucidate the rhetorical situation, arrangement, and argumentation of 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 and the Corinthian Christian idol-food dispute.

### **The Application of Rhetorical-Criticism to Paul's Letters**

Although rhetorical-criticism conducted within the context and categories of Greco-Roman rhetoric is widely used today by exegetes as a heuristic device for the interpretation of Paul's letters, there are still some prominent scholars who question the validity of its use. The main objection to the use of rhetorical-criticism is that Paul's writings are letters rather than speeches, while it is also asserted that it is inappropriate to analyze partial textual units within larger compositions as if they were complete, independent speeches.<sup>10</sup> It is certainly true that rhetorical theory and epistolary theory were not formally integrated in the first century A.D. and that letter writing is rarely treated in the ancient rhetorical handbooks. However, rhetorical theory did have some relationship with epistolary theory in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>11</sup> In fact, oral communication exercised priority over written communication as the primary medium of communication within Greco-Roman antiquity and, thus, various types of letters frequently adapted rhetorical conventions from analogous types of speeches.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, even if Paul did not consciously apply to his letters learned rhetorical theory which he had obtained by formal education,<sup>13</sup> there are numerous ways in which Paul could have become familiar with popular rhetorical conventions,<sup>14</sup> such as by the conscious or unconscious imitation of others' speeches and/or compositions within Greco-Roman society.<sup>15</sup> That having been said, it seems most probable that Paul did have

some formal training in Greco-Roman rhetoric, especially since rhetorical techniques, conventions, commonplaces, and terminology urging concord are used in 1 Corinthians which mirror those of analogous pagan Greek rhetorical compositions aimed at divided cities.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, regardless of how Paul acquired the conventions of Greco-Roman rhetoric, the application of rhetorical-criticism to Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 serves a heuristic function which illuminates the rhetorical situation, arrangement, and argumentation of the text.<sup>17</sup>

The objection made by some scholars, in which it is asserted that it is inappropriate to analyze smaller textual units as complete, independent speeches within Paul's letters apart from the compositional whole – as the present study will do – is frequently encountered by exegetes using rhetorical-criticism. Mitchell, a major proponent of rhetorical-criticism and an influential scholar who has applied ancient rhetoric to 1 Corinthians as a unified, compositional whole argues that scholars who rhetorically analyze smaller textual units “do not demonstrate why that portion is to be regarded as an independent literary unit with its own genre and structure.”<sup>18</sup> She also asserts that “subsections of a larger argument (‘proofs’) cannot be expected to be composed themselves of the same ‘parts’ as a rhetorical whole, such as an *exordium*...,” citing *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Quintilian in support of her case.<sup>19</sup> However, Quintilian expressed precisely the opposite of Mitchell's stated objection. Rather, he states that smaller units within a speech are frequently composed with the same rhetorical features that exist in the rhetorical whole. Quintilian writes:

It is at times possible to give the force of an *exordium* to other portions of the speech. For instance, we may ask the judges in the course of our statement of facts or of our arguments to give us their best attention and good-will...

Further if the case involves a number of different matters, each section must be prefaced with a short introduction... Even in the proof there are many passages which perform the same function as an *exordium*...<sup>20</sup>

Certainly 1 Corinthians "involves a number of different matters" that Paul addresses in his composition; in fact, so many different matters are addressed that scholars have struggled to find a connection between these different subject matters, some even resorting to partition theories. Quintilian also states that,

it seems to me that the beginning of every proof is a *propositio*, such as often occurs in the demonstration of the main question and sometimes even in the enunciation of individual arguments, more especially of those which are called ἐπιχειρήματα.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, in order for Mitchell's objection to be valid, Paul must be consciously, mechanically, and rigidly applying learned handbook rhetorical theory to his letter, something which Mitchell is certainly aware does not occur in practice by orators.<sup>22</sup> Thus, as it has been argued by J. D. Hester, Paul's missives are "a new type of letter, a hybrid product of epistolary and rhetorical theory, that is highly contextual in its argumentation."<sup>23</sup> Indeed, in his epistles Paul was a letter-writer creatively and eclectically addressing complex community situations.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Paul dictated his letters which were then meant to be delivered orally to the Christian assemblies that he addressed, a fact which further supports his eclectic mixing of rhetorical and epistolary theories as a persuasive communicator of the gospel of Christ.

Consequently, Mitchell has convincingly demonstrated that 1 Corinthians is a deliberative letter, that is, it is an example of a hybrid deliberative speech in a letter framework which addresses numerous issues over which the

Corinthian Christians were divided.<sup>25</sup> Deliberative rhetoric was commonly used in antiquity to persuade or dissuade legislative assemblies regarding some future course of action, oftentimes seeking unity for the common interest of divided cities. As a deliberative letter, Paul addresses divisive issues in the Corinthian assembly and argues for unifying behavior done in the common interest of the body of Christ, such as in the case of food offered to idols. Because Paul is creatively and eclectically addressing such divisive issues with the use of deliberative rhetoric, the arguments in 1 Corinthians have been freely arranged by Paul so as to address the topics about which he has been informed by a letter sent by the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 7:1) and by oral reports (cf. 1:11), rather than Paul composing 1 Corinthians as though he was mechanically following an established order of questions posed by the Corinthians in their letter. Therefore, in 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1 Paul addresses the Corinthian Christian dispute over idol-food consumption, one issue among many over which the Corinthians are divided. First Corinthians 8:1-13 is one subsection of Paul's larger rhetorical unit concerning food offered to idols in 8:1-11:1 which he treats in the letter. First Corinthians 8:1-13 shows itself to be a subsection as it has a clear transitional word indicated in 8:13, *διόπερ*, "therefore" (8:13) which bridges the next subsection of 9:1-27. However, before a survey of Paul's rhetorical arrangement and argumentation of 8:1-13 can be conducted, this subsection's rhetorical situation must first be established.

### **The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians 8:1-13**

Paul begins his instructions concerning idol-food consumption by presupposing a picture of the audience and the constraints of his discourse, what scholars such as

Bitzer have commonly referred to as the rhetorical situation.<sup>26</sup> There has been a general consensus among exegetes that the central focus of Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 is idol-food meals occurring primarily in pagan temple precincts. The primary difficulties in past interpretations stem from the particular issue in view, the location of and reason for Corinthian Christian idol-food consumption, and Paul's apparent contradictions throughout his argumentation.

The presupposed picture of the text – the rhetorical situation – is first indicated by the topic marker *περὶ δέ*, indicating that the subject is one about which both Paul and the Corinthians are familiar from some element of their shared experience: it is the subject of *εἰδωλόθυτα*. The term *εἰδωλόθυτον* is used five times by Paul in 1 Corinthians, while he also employs the term *ἱερόθυτον* in 10:28. The term *εἰδωλόθυτον* is a compound noun derived from the words *εἶδωλον* (“idol”) and *θύω* (“to sacrifice”/“to offer”), while *ἱερόθυτον* is a compound noun resulting from the words *ἱερόν* (“sacred”) and *θύω*. The word *εἰδωλόθυτον* is a pejorative term which seems to be of Christian origin rather than a term stemming from Jewish usage.<sup>27</sup> Witherington has strongly asserted that every instance of the term's first century A.D. usage outside of 1 Corinthians, *εἰδωλόθυτον* connotes meat eaten in the context of a pagan temple or in the presence of an idol,<sup>28</sup> whereas the term *ἱερόθυτον* refers to meat sacrificed in a pagan temple but not eaten there, nor in conjunction with temple worship.<sup>29</sup> Witherington asserts that these terminological differences which are evident in Paul's instructions reasonably explain his prohibition of idol-meat consumption in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 and 10:1-22 and his acceptance of its consumption in 10:23-11:1.<sup>30</sup> In 8:1-10:22, Witherington maintains, Paul believes that eating *εἰδωλόθυτον* in a pagan temple makes the Corinthians guilty of idolatry, and thus its consumption

is prohibited. However, Witherington argues that in 10:23-11:1 Paul allows the consumption of ἱερόθυτον because it is sacrificial meat purchased from the *macellum* and eaten in a private home. The only circumstance which would bar the consumption of ἱερόθυτον according to Witherington is if a “pagan host makes a point about it being meat that comes from a pagan temple.”<sup>31</sup> Witherington’s assertions are problematic on many fronts. To begin, the term εἰδωλόθυτον does not refer exclusively to meat as has been a longstanding general perception in New Testament exegesis, a term that was translated by Martin Luther into his German language Bible as *Götzenopferfleisch* (“meat offered to idols”). However, sacrificial food consisted of many other food products such as grain, legumes, seeds,<sup>32</sup> fish,<sup>33</sup> cakes (honeycake, cheesecake), fruit,<sup>34</sup> poultry,<sup>35</sup> honey, oil, milk, and wine.<sup>36</sup> Although Paul is certainly concerned with sacrificial meat in his instructions in light of 1 Corinthians 8:13 where the word κρέα (“meat”) appears, the food products that he has in view are more wide ranging, especially since the word βρώμα (“food”) is present in 8:8a and 8:13a. Paul also addresses “all” food sold in the *macellum* in 10:25-26 (πᾶν τὸ ἐν μακέλλῳ πωλούμενον) and “all” food served at private meals in pagan homes in 10:27-11:1 (πᾶν τὸ παρατιθέμενον), two situations where a variety of food products, beyond merely meat, were encountered that could be idol-food. Moreover, in 10:21 Paul most likely addresses the issue of drinking wine libations offered to pagan deities (ποτήριον δαιμονίων). Hence, the translation of εἰδωλόθυτα as food offered to idols or idol-food is clearly preferable to that of idol-meat. It has also been demonstrated by Cheung in his investigation of the past usage of the terms εἰδωλόθυτον and ἱερόθυτον that these terms do not indicate anything about the situation in which sacrificial food was consumed. Rather, the terms have two meanings: they can refer to sacrificial food eaten in a

temple as well as to sacrificial food purchased from the market and eaten elsewhere.<sup>37</sup> The rhetorical situation for idol-food consumption must be sought in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13.

In the discussion of Paul's instructions on food offered to idols, the act of sacrifice in Greco-Roman religions is seldom surveyed. However, an investigation of 1 Corinthians 8:1-13's rhetorical situation necessitates such a discussion. According to Walter Burkert, the sacrifice of animal victims is the ritualized "slaughter and consumption of a domestic animal for a god."<sup>38</sup> Although Burkert writes with the context of public sacrifice at a pagan temple in mind, sacrificial rites that were followed by the consumption of the animal victim at private homes were also extremely common in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>39</sup> Before the act of ritual slaughter, male animals were to be chosen for male deities, and female animals were to be chosen for female deities. Human participants in the sacrifice would wash and wear clean clothing. The participants would also be adorned with crowns made from leafy branches either before the sacrifice or the libation. Incense was commonly offered to the deity and the participants had water sprinkled on their hands as an act of purification, while water was also sprinkled on the animal causing it to nod its head in consent to the sacrifice. The sacrifice would be conducted in silence while the one who sacrificed covered their head with the fold of their toga as a prayer was said. The animal then had its throat slit above the altar, the blood flowed down and was then sprinkled around the altar. The animal was then skinned, butchered, and roasted. The inner organs and inedible portions of the animal were cut up and put on the altar where a fire had been lit so that the deity could consume them. If a blemish was found in the animal's organs, the sacrifice would be repeated with another animal. The edible portions of the animal that had been roasted were then served to devotees in temple din-

ing rooms within the *temenos* (sacred enclosure), or if the temple had no dining rooms the roasted sacrificial meat might be taken home for a private meal.

When a sacrifice occurred at a home, these types of ritual actions also took place before the consumption of the sacrificial victim at a formal meal. This description of sacrifice and the ritual involved is especially important to keep in mind when we consider the Corinthian Christians attending sacrificial meals at pagan temples or private homes. The basic structure of the sacrifice conveys serious, highly religious ritual and solemn religious dedication despite the accompanying meal being an authentic meal which had true social importance.<sup>40</sup> This should help us to understand the seriousness with which Paul takes idol-food consumption at pagan temples, why he can so easily equate idol-food consumption with idolatry (1 Cor 10:1-22), and why it causes the weak to be defiled and suffer spiritual destruction (1 Cor 8:11-12).

Although numerous claims have been made by scholars regarding the wide array of temple dining rooms that were available for Corinthian idol-food consumption ca. 56 A.D., throughout the city in Corinth's various Greco-Roman cults, including that of the imperial cult, the archaeological evidence presents an entirely different picture.<sup>41</sup> There is, in fact, no evidence for temple dining rooms associated with the imperial cult in Roman Corinth.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, according to S.R.F. Price, there is no evidence from the archaeological record of more than eighty sanctuaries dedicated to the imperial cult of dining rooms like those that have been discovered in sanctuaries of other pagan cults in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>43</sup> Rather, in Roman Corinth the Asklepieion is the only temple complex with functioning dining rooms that can be definitively demonstrated to have been operating at the time of 1 Corinthians's composition. The Asklepieion's relaxing environment and location just outside the city cen-



ter with its shaded colonnade, three luxuriously appointed dining rooms, the availability of sacrificial food sacred to Asklepios, and a plentiful supply of fresh water springs would have made the Asklepieion an attractive place for Corinthians to dine at formal meals. This setting certainly qualifies as eating in an idol's temple and is the most plausible context for 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, as well as for 10:1-22. Although numerous dining rooms have been uncovered at the Sanctuary of Demeter on the slope of the Acrocorinth and scholars have made a case for them as the location of Corinthian Christian idol-food consumption, these dining rooms no longer functioned as such but by the time of Paul's sojourn in Corinth they had been covered over with debris and had become a repository for curse tablets.<sup>44</sup>

Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians 8:10 that those eating idol-food at the temple dining rooms were reclining during the meal, indicating that the context was a formal meal appropriate to higher status males. The freedom to recline at formal meals was generally the prerogative of free male citizens in the first century A.D. Women, slaves, and children generally were expected to sit during formal meals. There is some evidence that women were able to recline in Roman contexts during the first century A.D. and in Greek contexts during the second century A.D.<sup>45</sup> At such formal meals at temple dining rooms food was served that had been sacrificed to deities on occasions in honor of both hosts, guests, and deities. Birthdays, weddings, governmental appointments, religious holidays, miracles, and healings could all be celebrated by formal meals in the dining rooms of the Corinthian Asklepieion. Thus, it seems probable that those Corinthian Christians in favor of idol-food consumption were higher status members in the Corinthian church since they would have been those who had frequent occasion to recline at formal meals. They would also, then, have been those who had a relatively high level of educational

attainment and who would have been somewhat affluent,<sup>46</sup> social markers consistent with the Corinthian Strong quotations embedded in the text that will be examined below. The restrictions that Paul attempts to place on their sexual activity, idolatry, and idol-food consumption throughout 1 Corinthians 6, 8, and 10 would have had serious social,<sup>47</sup> economic, and political consequences in an entrepreneurial city like Roman Corinth. The consequences of the restrictions that Paul attempts to place on them helps to explain their vehement defense of their freedom to eat idol-food. The identity of the Weak – those in theory opposed to idol-food consumption – is more difficult to reconstruct. They may have been lower status members of the Corinthian church,<sup>48</sup> people who would have felt significant social pressure to eat sacrificial food in imitation of the Strong although they did not possess the same theological knowledge about the non-existence of pagan deities and, thus, by eating, their weak moral consciousness was defiled. Therefore, Paul must address both the Strong and the Weak as he attempts to prohibit idol-food consumption while seeking to unite both groups in his instructions.

### **The Rhetorical Arrangement and Argumentation of 1 Corinthians 8:1-13**

At the core of the interpretive difficulties surrounding Paul's instructions on idol-food are the seemingly contradictory statements made in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13. It is asserted in 8:1b that πάντες γῶσιν ἔχομεν "we all have knowledge," yet 8:7a contradicts this assertion by stating that ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν πᾶσιν ἡ γνῶσις, "But not everyone has this knowledge."<sup>49</sup> In 8:5a there is another inconsistency that appears where there is a "concessive relating to a contingent possibility"<sup>50</sup> for the sake of argument illustrated by εἴπερ εἰσὶν λεγόμενοι θεοὶ..., "even if there are

so-called gods...," a statement which is contrasted with a positive assertion in 8:5b, ὥπερ εἰσὶν θεοὶ πολλοί..., "but in fact there are many gods." Lastly, 8:8a proclaims that βρῶμα δὲ ἡμᾶς οὐ παραστήσει τῷ θεῷ, "food will not bring us before the judgment of God," but 8:12b likens idol-food consumption with sinning "against Christ," εἰς Χριστὸν ἁμαρτάνετε, an evaluation which is also supported by 10:1-13 which warns the idol-food eating Corinthians that the Israelites had tested Christ in the wilderness by eating idol-food and were struck down. These apparent contradictions and the aim of Paul's argumentation can be coherently understood by investigating the rhetorical arrangement of 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 and by recognizing the presence of Corinthian Strong quotations embedded within a rhetorical *partitio*.

A few recent scholars have recognized 8:1-6 as a rhetorical *partitio*.<sup>51</sup> Although it is my position that there Paul does use a *partitio* as a rhetorical device in order to begin his treatment of the Corinthian idol-food dispute, the *partitio* extends from 8:1-9 and includes Paul's positions as well as positions which he quotes from the Corinthian Strong. According to Quintilian, the renowned Roman teacher of oratory,<sup>52</sup> a *partitio* is "the orderly enumeration of our positions [*propositiones*], those of our opponent, or both."<sup>53</sup> Because Paul was quite adept at using the rhetorical devices of moral persuasion analogous to those used by contemporary pagan moralists in the Greco-Roman world,<sup>54</sup> and because it was quite common for such moralists and orators to present their own positions and that of their opponents when numerous points needed to be proved or refuted, Paul's use of a rhetorical *partitio* in 1 Corinthians 8:1-9 is an appropriate device to begin his lengthy treatment of the Corinthian idol-food dispute. Moreover, it should be remembered that the Corinthians had sent a letter to Paul (cf. 1 Cor 7:1) in response to his previous letter

(cf. 1 Cor 5:9, a.k.a. Corinthians A) in which the Strong expressed their views about various issues. Scholars are in general agreement that this Corinthian letter does not seem to have been a friendly request for advice from Paul and that some of the bold assertions that were made by the Strong are quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians.<sup>55</sup> Thus, portions of the Corinthians' letter are embedded within 1 Corinthians and Paul quotes from these positions to first establish the views of the Corinthian Strong in order to then refute these views with his own positions. For example, there is a recognizable Corinthian position quoted by Paul in 7:1b which is first introduced by the topic marker *περὶ δέ* (and concerning) referring to the issue about which the Corinthians wrote (*Περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράψατε*), followed by the Corinthian quotation in 7:1b, *καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γυναικὸς μὴ ἅπτεσθαι*, "it is good for a man not to touch a woman." After Paul has quoted the position of the Corinthians, which they had asserted in their letter to him, he refutes their view with his position beginning with an adversative *δὲ* : *διὰ δὲ τὰς πορνείας ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἔχτω καὶ ἑκάστη τὸν ἴδιον ἄνδρα ἔχτω*, "But because of sexual immoralities, each man should have his own wife and each woman should have her own husband." The quotation of Corinthian positions followed by Pauline refutations commonly indicated by an adversative such as *δὲ* or *ἀλλὰ* is a fairly regular method of argumentation in 1 Corinthians. There are also probable Corinthian quotations quoted by Paul and then refuted with an adversative *δὲ* or *ἀλλὰ* such as 6:12a, 6:12c, 6:13a-b, 6:18b, 10:23a, and 10:23c. As will be discussed below, there are also Corinthian quotations present in Paul's *partitio* of 8:1-13 in 8:1b-c, 8:4b-c, 8:5a, 8:6, 8:8a, 8:8b-c (without the double *οὔτε*, "neither"), the recognition of which make his instructions on idol-food fully consistent and coherent.

Paul enters into his treatment of the Corinthian idol-food dispute with the topic marker *περὶ δέ*, indicating

that this is a subject that is familiar to both Paul and the Corinthians. His *partitio* is begun with a position of the Strong which was asserted in their letter that is now quoted by Paul, “We know that we all have knowledge” (8:1b). It seems likely that the quotation begins with οἶδαμεν ὅτι (“We know that”)<sup>56</sup> rather than with πάντες (“we all”)<sup>57</sup> since if οἶδαμεν ὅτι is Paul’s remark then he agrees with the statement that all have knowledge, only to refute it in 8:1c-3 and 8:7a, thus undermining the force of his argument. Moreover, “knowledge” is an issue that is frequently raised throughout 1 Corinthians as something about which the Strong are confident but which Paul modifies or refutes.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, even some commentators who were adept at using ancient rhetoric, such as John Chrysostom, have claimed that the entirety of 8:1b-c is Paul’s statement rather than that of the Corinthians. Chrysostom, remarking on Paul’s method of persuasion, states, Τί οὖν ποιεῖ; Πρῶτον τῷ δεῖξαι κοινὴν αὐτὴν οὖσαν, καταστέλλει τὸ φύσημα τὸ ἐκείνων.<sup>59</sup> Although Chrysostom does not identify 8:1b-c as a Corinthian quotation, he clearly sees it as representing a Corinthian position which is restated by Paul in order to be later qualified by the apostle. Theodoret, however, does not accept the interpretation proposed by Chrysostom, and clearly sees the contradictions evident in 8:1b and 8:7a. Theodoret, however, discovers another reason for the text’s incoherence. He views these contradictions in Paul’s instructions as stemming from the apostle’s use of irony. Theodoret remarks<sup>60</sup> on 8:1b that: Εἰρωνικῶς τοίνυν τέθεικε τὸ, οἶδαμεν ὅτι πάντες γινώσιν ἔχομεν. εἴτα ἐπάγει, ἢ γινώσις φυσιοῖ...

Again commenting on 8:7a Theodoret states, Ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐν πᾶσιν ἢ γινώσις. Ταῦτα, φησίν, οὐχ ἅπαντες ἴσασιν. Ἐντεῦθεν δῆλον ὡς κατ’ εἰρωνίαν εἶπεν ἐμπροσθεν, οἶδαμεν ὅτι πάντες γινώσιν ἔχομεν. The examples of Chrysostom and Theodoret are sufficient

to demonstrate that there is recognizable incoherence in the positions of 8:1b and 8:7a that requires explanation, even if two brilliant Orthodox exegetes who were skilled in rhetoric have very different interpretations. Nevertheless, in my view it seems more likely that the text's apparent incoherence does not stem from a persuasive strategy of association with the opponents' position in order to later qualify it (Chrysostom), nor does it stem from Paul's use of irony (Theodoret). Rather, the text's apparent incoherence is caused by our failure to recognize Paul's quotation of Corinthian Strong positions followed by his refutation of them with his own arguments within the popular rhetorical convention of a *partitio* where orators commonly quote their opponents and then proceed to refute them as they prepare for the central arguments of the speech.

In 8:1c-3 Paul immediately rejects the Corinthians' bold assertion of 8:1b that they all have knowledge by presenting a refutation having three components, stating:

ἡ γνῶσις φυσιοῖ, ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ  
Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

εἴ τις δοκεῖ ἐγνώκεναι τι, οὐπω ἔγνω καθὼς δεῖ  
γνῶναι

If someone thinks they know something, they do not yet know as they should.

εἰ δέ τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν θεόν, οὗτος ἔγνωσται ὑπ' αὐτοῦ

If someone loves God, they are known by him.

Paul here asserts that the knowledge that the Corinthian Strong claim everyone in the church possesses results in arrogance (φυσιοῖ), and is not the proper kind of knowledge that they should have. Rather, the knowledge that the Corinthian Strong display destroys the Weak (8:11), rather than building them up in love (8:1c). Moreover, Paul stress-

es that if someone loves God, they are concerned with being known by God in loving relationship and should have a modest, realistic assessment of their knowledge.

In 8:4-9 Paul once again uses a topic marker, this time worded a bit differently, as *περὶ τῆς βρώσεως οὖν τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων* (v. 4a), in order to return to the positions of the Corinthian Strong, which he then quotes. The word *βρώσεως* is a verbal noun which means "eating," a term indicating that the main issue here confronted by Paul and the Corinthians is the actual consumption of sacrificial food, rather than just a general issue of sacrificial food itself. The verbal noun *βρώσεως* reinforces the *narratio* (statement of facts) in 8:10 which indicates that Paul is primarily addressing the context of sacrificial food consumption in pagan temples.<sup>61</sup> Paul proceeds to quote the Corinthian Strong's positions which represent their knowledge which they use to support their consumption of idol-food (v. 4b-c):<sup>62</sup>

οὐδὲν εἶδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ  
No idol exists in the world.

οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς  
No God exists but one.

In these two positions the Corinthian Strong justify their consumption of sacrificial food. If the pagan deities represented by cult statues do not truly exist and only the one God of the Christians truly exists, then eating idol-food cannot possibly be harmful. Such a sophisticated theological justification (i.e. knowledge) of idol-food consumption would comfortably allow the higher status Corinthian Christian Strong to attend formal meals at pagan temples with pagan friends, business associates, and relatives with impunity.

It has been correctly argued by Willis that the knowledge expressed in 8:4b-c is developed further in 8:5a with *καὶ*

γὰρ acting as explanatory conjunctions for the content of Corinthian Strong knowledge which is then expressed in 8:6.<sup>63</sup> The Corinthian Strong's further explanation of their knowledge and assessment of their surrounding pagan religious environment in 8:5a is expressed as a "concessive relating to a contingent possibility"<sup>64</sup> for the sake of argument, something indicated by εἴπερ εἰσὶν λεγόμενοι..., "For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or whether on earth." First Corinthians 8:5b is most logically interpreted as Paul's interruption and refutation of the Strong's assessment,<sup>65</sup> correcting their assertion that pagan gods and lords have no real existence, indicated by ὥσπερ εἰσὶν..., "But in fact there are..." Paul here establishes a point in his *partitio* that he will develop further in 10:14-22, namely that the pagan deities do in fact exist, not as gods but as demons. Thus, because pagan deities which are represented by their cult statues at formal meals in pagan temples do exist as demons, the Strong are not to consume idol-food.

The content of the Corinthian Strong's knowledge is expressed in a confessional formula<sup>66</sup> in 8:6:

But for us there is one God, the Father (v. 6a)  
 From whom are all things and for whom we  
 exist, (v. 6b)  
 And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ (v. 6c)  
 From whom are all things and through whom we  
 exist (v. 6d).

ἀλλ' ἡμῖν εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ  
 ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν,  
 καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς  
 δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ.

This confessional formula using the phrase εἷς θεὸς has been drawn from the Shema' of Deuteronomy 6:4.<sup>67</sup> It seems reasonable to assume that Paul himself had handed



on a confession in some similar form to the Corinthians during his founding mission to the city.<sup>68</sup> This is especially likely since confessions with the phrase εἰς θεὸς are also used by Paul in Galatians 3:20 and Romans 3:30.<sup>69</sup> Thus, 1 Corinthians 8:6 more fully articulates the Corinthian Strong's theological assertions which were expressed in 8:4, which they use to justify their consumption of sacrificial food.<sup>70</sup>

In 8:7 Paul bluntly refutes the conclusions of the Corinthian Strong that all have knowledge, although he does subtly imply that he agrees with the content of the confessional formula expressed in 8:6. Paul uses the adversative ἀλλά to definitively correct the Strong's notion that all have the knowledge, first expressed in 8:4-5a and 8:6, to justify their idol-food consumption.<sup>71</sup> Some Corinthians – the Weak – do not have this knowledge, and are so accustomed to idols that they still think of idol-food as having been sacrificed to a supernatural being having real existence, thus defiling their συνείδησις, “moral consciousness” (v. 7b-c) by their consumption of sacrificial food.<sup>72</sup>

Paul resumes his quotation of Corinthian Strong positions in 8:8 with several maxims. The first maxim (8:8a) states, βρῶμα δὲ ἡμᾶς οὐ παραστήσει τῷ θεῷ, “Food will not bring us before the judgment of God.” Here the term παραστήσει means “to bring before the judgment.”<sup>73</sup> Numerous exegetes view 8:8a as a Corinthian quotation.<sup>74</sup> The real difficulty is interpreting to whom belongs the maxim of 8:8b-c. If 8:8a is the position of Paul, then he believes that idol-food consumption is morally neutral, an *adiaphoron*, a view which the present study has already argued is untenable. Moreover, if Paul believes that idol-food consumption is morally neutral and only prohibits it when a weaker Christian can be harmed, then why does he equate idol-food consumption with idolatry in 10:1-

22? Therefore, the most plausible explanation is that 8:8a is a Corinthian Strong position which Paul quotes as part of his *partitio*. The Strong are the ones who believe that idol-food is morally neutral because of their enlightened theological knowledge about the non-existence of pagan deities and the true existence of the Triune God.

First Corinthians 8:8b-c seems to continue the Strong's quotation with Paul's "correction of the Corinthian position."<sup>75</sup> Thus, the maxim as it was sent to Paul in the Corinthians' letter read ἐὰν μὴ φάγωμεν ὑστερούμεθα, ἐὰν φάγωμεν περισσεύομεν, while the double οὔτε stand as Paul's correction of the statement. This maxim expresses the social and economic advantages of sacrificial food consumption ("we are better off if we eat") over against the disadvantages of abstaining from sacrificial food ("we are worse off if we do not eat"). However, Paul corrects the Strong's belief by asserting that they are *not* better off for eating and they are *not* worse off for abstaining. Such a reconstruction is especially probably in light of 8:9 in which Paul begins a refutation of the Strong's maxim with an adversative δὲ.

Paul in 8:9 refutes the Strong's maxim with an adversative δὲ and provides a warning: βλέπετε δὲ μή πως ἡ ἐξουσία ὑμῶν αὕτη πρόσκομμα γέγηται τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν, "But beware that this freedom of yours does not become the downfall of the Weak." It is ἡ ἐξουσία ὑμῶν αὕτη, "this freedom of yours," to eat sacrificial food for the social and economic benefits based on Corinthian knowledge expressed in 8:4-6,8 that becomes the downfall of the Weak. Many exegetes have agreed that in 8:9 Paul is in principle agreement with the Strong's freedom to participate in sacrificial meals, but only warns that they should be mindful of the Weak before eating.<sup>76</sup> However, this interpretation is not tenable since ἐξουσία is a catchword of the Strong, Paul having earlier criticized

the Strong's freedom (6:12) which they couple with their rhetorical abilities and knowledge (1 Cor 2-4).<sup>77</sup> Paul uses the term ἐξουσία ironically in order to show the negative consequences of its use by the Strong,<sup>78</sup> warning them with the admonition βλέπετε.<sup>79</sup> Horsley is correct in noting that "Paul's autobiographical argument concerning 'freedom' in ch. 9, in which he further explains his instructions of 8:13, is aimed directly at this "freedom."

Thus, a probable reconstruction of the Strong's justification of their sacrificial food consumption which is quoted by Paul in 8:1-8 is as follows:

οἶδαμεν ὅτι πάντες γινώσκιν ἔχομεν. οἶδαμεν ὅτι οὐδὲν εἰδῶλον ἐν κόσμῳ καὶ ὅτι οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς. καὶ γὰρ εἶπερ εἰσὶν λεγόμενοι θεοὶ εἴτε ἐν οὐρανῷ εἴτε ἐπὶ γῆς, ἀλλ' ἡμῖν εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν, καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ. βρῶμα δὲ ἡμᾶς οὐ παραστήσει τῷ θεῷ. εἰ μὴ φάγωμεν ὑπερσσεύομεθα, εἰ μὴ φάγωμεν περισσεύομεν

We know that we all have knowledge. We know that no idol exists in the world and that no God exists but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or whether on earth – but for us there is one God, the Father from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, from whom are all things and through whom we exist. Food will not bring us before God in judgment. We are worse off if we do not eat, and we are better off if we eat.

In 8:10 Paul has placed the *narratio* (statement of facts) for the rhetorical situation of his instructions on sacrificial food, which specifies the problem at hand: reclining at idol-food meals in temple precincts. According to Quintilian, the *narratio* is the statement of facts which consist of "the persuasive description of that which either has been done, or is supposed to have been done, or to quote the defi-

nition given by Apollodorus, is a speech instructing the audience about the nature of the case in dispute.”<sup>80</sup> The nature of the case in which Paul describes what has been done is concrete: the Corinthian Strong have been seen reclining at formal meals in an εἰδωλείῳ, consuming idol-food. The Weak are then “built up” to eat idol-food as well.<sup>81</sup> However, the Weak eat idol-food without the same theological knowledge about the non-existence of pagan deities which the Strong possess, thus the influence of the Strong’s knowledge and behavior on the Weak is that the Weak one for whom Christ died is destroyed (vv. 11-12). The Strong’s idol-food consumption is a sin against fellow Christian brothers and sisters and is equivalent to sinning against Christ (v. 12b). Paul then concludes this subsection of his instructions concerning food offered to idols in 8:1-13, indicated by διόπερ,<sup>82</sup> with an argument providing an example of proper conduct to imitate. The example provided is Paul’s own conduct, which is even willing to renounce the consumption of non-sacrificial meat (v. 13) if such meat-eating causes a brother or sister to fall. Paul’s example is meant to illustrate the lengths that he would go to for the benefit of the Weak for whom Christ died. If he can renounce non-sacrificial meat, which is truly his right (ἐξουσία), to eat for the sake of the Weak, then the consumption of idol-food which the Strong advocate as their right but which instead brings them into communion with demons (10:14-22) should be clearly rejected. Moreover, 8:13 is also a transitional verse which connects 8:1-13 with the next subsection of 9:1-27. It is in 9:1-27 where Paul elaborates on his positive example for imitation by demonstrating that he forsakes legitimate apostolic rights (ἐξουσία) for the common advantage of the Weak.

## Conclusions

Past studies on Paul's Corinthian discussion of idol-food have reached numerous, contradictory conclusions about the apostle's instructions. It has been the position of this article that by examining the rhetorical situation, arrangement, and argumentation of 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, it is possible to see that Paul consistently rejects the consumption of sacrificial food in pagan temple precincts. Through the application of rhetorical-criticism, it was shown that Paul has used the popular rhetorical convention of a *partitio* in order to present the position of the Corinthian Strong in the form of quotations which he then proceeds to refute with his own contrasting arguments. The recognition of Corinthian Strong quotations in 8:1-8 exonerates Paul from having generated inconsistent or incoherent instructions. Rather, Paul shows himself to be a powerful communicator, adeptly using the established rhetorical conventions of his time analogous to those used by popular moralists of the Greco-Roman world. The apostle uses these established rhetorical conventions in order to make his case against the theologically sophisticated arguments of the Corinthian Strong which they use to argue for their freedom to eat sacrificial food. Thus, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 is a subsection of Paul's larger rhetorical unit addressing the consumption of sacrificial food (1 Cor 8:1-11:1) in which he attempts to persuade the Corinthians to cease intentional idol-food consumption at formal meals within pagan temple precincts.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Duane F. Watson, "1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1 in the Light of Greco-Roman Rhetoric: The Role of Rhetorical Questions," *JBL* 108 (1989), 301-18; Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 126-149,

237-57; Hermann Probst, *Paulus und der Brief: Die Rhetorik des antiken Briefes als Form der paulinischen Korintherkorrespondenz (1 Kor 8-10)* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 45; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991); Gary D. Collier, "'That We Might Not Crave Evil': The Structure and Argument of 1 Corinthians 10.1-13," *JSNT* 55 (1994), 55-75; Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI and Carlisle: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 186-230; Abraham J. Malherbe, "Determinism and Free Will in Paul: The Argument of 1 Corinthians 8 and 9," in *Paul in his Hellenistic Context* (ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 231-55; Gregory W. Dawes, "The Danger of Idolatry: First Corinthians 8:7-13," *CBQ* 58 (1996), 82-98; Stanley K. Stowers, "Elusive Coherence: Ritual and Rhetoric in 1 Corinthians 10-11," in *Reimagining Christian Origins: A Colloquium Honoring Burton L. Mack* (eds. E. A. Castelli and H. Taussig; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1996), 68-83; Joël Delobel, "Coherence and Relevance of 1 Corinthians 8-10," in *The Corinthian Correspondence* (ed. R. Bieringer; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 177-190; Joop F. M. Smit, "1 Cor 8,1-6: A Rhetorical Partitio, A Contribution to the Coherence of 1 Cor 8,1-11,1," in *The Corinthian Correspondence* (ed. R. Bieringer; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 577-91; idem, "'Do Not Be Idolaters': Paul's Rhetoric in First Corinthians 10:1-22," *NovT* 39 (1997), 40-53; idem, "The Function of First Corinthians 10,23-30: A Rhetorical Anticipation," *Bib* 78 (1997), 377-88; idem, "The Rhetorical Disposition of First Corinthians 8:7-9:27," *CBQ* 59 (1997), 476-91; idem, "'You Shall Not Muzzle a Threshing Ox': Paul's Use of the Law of Moses in First Corinthians 9,8-12," *EstBib* 58 (2000), 239-63; idem, *"About the Idol Offerings": Rhetoric, Social Context, and Theology of Paul's Discourse in First Corinthians 8:1-11:1* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000); Anders Eriksson, *Traditions as Rhetorical Proof: Pauline Argumentation in 1 Corinthians* (ConBNT 29; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1998), 135-73; John Fotopoulos, *Food Offered to Idols in Roman Corinth: A Social-Rhetorical Reconsideration of 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 151; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> So, e.g., Johannes Weiß, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (Meyer; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), 211-30; Khiok-Khng Yeo, *Rhetorical Interaction in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10: A Formal Analysis with Preliminary Suggestions for a Chinese, Cross-Cultural Hermeneutic* (BIS 9; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 83, 194, 209; Hans-Friedemann Richter, "Anstößige Freiheit in Korinth: Zur Literarkritik der Korintherbriefe

(1 Kor 8,1-13 und 11, 2-16)," in *The Corinthian Correspondence* (ed. R. Bieringer; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 561-75. For a critical assessment of various partition theories for 1 Corinthians and arguments for the letter's literary integrity, see Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 2-5.

<sup>3</sup> John C. Hurd, *The Origins of 1 Corinthians* (London: S.P.C.K., 1965; repr., Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), 240-62; C.K. Barrett, "Things Sacrificed to Idols," *NTS* 11 (1965), 150; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 190.

<sup>4</sup> Chrysostom, PG 61.161; Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 241; Dawes, "The Danger of Idolatry," 92; Eriksson, *Traditions*, 135-73.

<sup>5</sup> Peter D. Gooch, *Dangerous Food: 1 Corinthians 8-10 in its Context* (Ontario: Corporation Canadienne des Sciences Religieuses, by Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1993), 88. Barrett, "Things Sacrificed," 148, even though finding a role for the Apostolic Decree in the Corinthian idol-food dispute, still finds Paul's instructions to be confused or inconsistent.

<sup>6</sup> Representatives of this scholarly view are Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (trans. J. W. Leitch; Hermeneia 36; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 178-79; and Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 199, who states: "Paul does not dispute that the Corinthians have a right to eat such food, so far as food is concerned. Chs. 8-10 make clear how far from Judaism Paul had moved on the matter of food." But 1 Corinthians 8-10 convey precisely the opposite; that is, Paul understands intentional idol-food consumption to be idolatry which also causes the Weak brother for whom Christ died to perish.

<sup>7</sup> Some modern New Testament scholars are not the first to misinterpret Paul's *kerygma* and the implications of freedom from Torah observance for Gentile converts. It seems that Paul's Law-free gospel was misinterpreted by a number of early Jewish-Christians (cf. Gal 2:11-21, 5:7-15; Rom 6:15-19) who had serious objections to its reputed ethical freedom for Gentile Christian converts and/or to its freedom from circumcision and *kashrut*. Moreover, from the second century A.D. onward, various Gnostic groups also misinterpreted Paul's Law-free gospel, and adeptly appropriated its content to suit their own teachings regarding the body and ethical freedom. See, for example, 2 Pet 3:15b-17 which comments on contemporary misinterpretation of Paul's Law-free gospel in the second century A.D.: "So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of these things as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the uneducated and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do

the other scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, beware that you are not carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability."

<sup>8</sup> My understanding of Paul's gospel message has been greatly influenced by scholars of the "New Perspective," such as E. P. Sanders and others. However, the single greatest influence on my understanding of Paul's thought is the outstanding work of D. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 73. Boyarin, 134, later writes that the "Law of Christ refers to the Law according to the spirit, the Law of faith working through love, which enjoins those practices of agape which Jesus has also in his person taught."

<sup>10</sup> R. Dean Anderson Jr., *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul* (rev. ed.; Leuven: Peeters, 1998); P. H. Kern, *Rhetoric and Galatians: Assessing an Approach to Paul's Epistle* (SNRSMS 101; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); David E. Aune, *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003). Aune's assessment of the use of rhetorical criticism for the exegesis of Paul's letters is the most nuanced and balanced. His *Dictionary* itself is a masterpiece filled with a wealth of knowledge on ancient rhetoric. Margaret M. Mitchell, although a major proponent of rhetorical criticism, also cautions against the analysis of a partial textual unit as if it were an independent speech.

<sup>11</sup> David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (LEC 8; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 160-61; Stanley Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (LEC 5; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 32-35; Carl Joachim Classen, *Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament* (WUNT 128; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 6.

<sup>12</sup> Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 33-34.

<sup>13</sup> Scholarly opinion regarding Paul's formal rhetorical training and conscious application of rhetorical conventions to his letters varies widely. For an overview of the relationship between rhetorical theory and epistolary theory, see R. Dean Anderson Jr., *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul* (rev. ed.; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 109-127. For a critique of Anderson, see Margaret M. Mitchell, review of R. Dean Anderson Jr., *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul*, *CBQ* 60.2 (1998), 356-58.

<sup>14</sup> Classen, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 6, believes it likely that Paul was familiar with Greek rhetorical theory. See Classen's survey of Paul's use of the terminology of ancient Greek rhetoric, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 29-44. Classen states, "...Paul was familiar with a number of



technical terms of Greek rhetoric. Where he knew them from I do not venture to decide; their use, however, together with that of technical terms of philosophy signify a standard of education which warrants the assumption that Paul was familiar through theory (handbooks) or practice (actual application) with the rules and precepts of ancient rhetoric (and epistolography)" (*Rhetorical Criticism*, 44).

<sup>15</sup> Carl Joachim Classen, "St. Paul's Epistles and Ancient Greek and Roman Rhetoric," *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (eds. S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht; JSNTSup 90; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 269. cf. Eriksson, *Traditions*, 28-29.

<sup>16</sup> Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*.

<sup>17</sup> Eriksson, *Traditions*, 28-29; Smit, "About the Idol Offerings," 40-44.

<sup>18</sup> Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 16, n. 52.

<sup>20</sup> Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 4.1.73-75.

<sup>21</sup> Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 4.4.1.

<sup>22</sup> Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*, 10-11.

<sup>23</sup> James D. Hester, "Rhetoric and the Composition of the Letters of Paul," n.d. [accessed 4 February 2002]. *Journal for the Study of Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament*. Online at <http://newton.uor.edu/FacultyFolder/Hester/Journal/HesterComp.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Aune, *The New Testament*, 203.

<sup>25</sup> Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric*.

<sup>26</sup> Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *PR* 1 (1968), 1-14.

<sup>27</sup> Witherington, "Not So Idle Thoughts about Eidolothuton," 239-41; Cheung, *Idol Food*, 39-81, 319-22.

<sup>28</sup> Witherington, "Not So Idle Thoughts about Eidolothuton," 238-42.

<sup>29</sup> Witherington, "Not So Idle Thoughts about Eidolothuton," 240; cf. 247-48.

<sup>30</sup> Witherington, "Not So Idle Thoughts about Eidolothuton," 240.

<sup>31</sup> Witherington, "Why Not Idol Meat?" 42, also considers it possible that this person could be a pagan guest. Witherington seems to have changed his initial position regarding the identity of the person in 1 Corinthians 10:28 who says that the food is ἱερόθυτον. In his earliest article on the subject, "Not So Idle Thoughts about Eidolothuton," 247, Witherington identifies this person as a weak Christian. Later, in "Why Not Idol Meat?" 42, and in *Conflict and Community*, 227, Witherington identifies this person as a pagan.

<sup>32</sup> Allaire Brumfield, "Cakes in the Liknon: Votives from the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on AcroCorinth," *Hesperia* 66.1 (1997),

148.

<sup>33</sup> Fish (or cakes?) appear to be what is being offered to Asklepios in a sculptured relief plaque that is displayed in the museum of Ancient Corinth. I have been unable to locate this plaque in any published catalogue.

<sup>34</sup> The evidence for these food products in the cult of Asklepios is collected in Edelstein and Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 1:284-311.

<sup>35</sup> Juvenal, *Satires* 6.540-41, states that sacrificial birds quelled the anger of Osiris in the cult of Isis.

<sup>36</sup> These were extremely common sacrificial food products used for libations to heavenly deities (*sponde*) and libations to chthonic deities (*choai*)

<sup>37</sup> Cheung, *Idol Food*, 320.

<sup>38</sup> Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 55.

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion with ancient references, see Fotopoulos, *Food Offered to Idols*, 158-78.

<sup>40</sup> Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 57.

<sup>41</sup> Some scholars simply take for granted that there were many temples that provided such dining room facilities in ancient Corinth that are no longer evident in the archaeological record. Although this may be the case, it is sheer speculation without factual evidence to support it. Rather, we can only positively state that which the archaeological record supports: the Asklepieion was the only temple in Roman Corinth with dining room facilities that functioned as such in the mid-50's A.D. that we know of to date. Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 269-86, asserts that the Corinthians had argued for their rights (ἐχουσία) as citizens to eat idol-food in the Temple of Poseidon complex in conjunction with the federal imperial cult celebrated at the newly re-sited Isthmian Games at Isthmia. However, there is no evidence in the archaeological record of temple dining rooms that functioned at the Temple of Poseidon in Isthmia during the time of 1 Corinthians's composition. Also, the Isthmian Games were not reestablished at Isthmia until possibly as late as 60 A.D., the condition and operational level of Poseidon's Temple being quite uncertain before that time. Finally, in 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1, Paul does not address an issue that arises only once every two to four years at the biennial and quadrennial Isthmian Games, but addresses the consumption of sacrificial food at temples, homes, and from the *macellum*, a widespread and normative issue faced by the Christians of Roman Corinth on a daily basis.

<sup>42</sup> See the survey of Roman Corinth's archaeological record for the presence of temple dining rooms ca. 56 A.D. and for a discussion of the Corinthian imperial cult in Fotopoulos, *Food Offered to Idols*, 129-57.

<sup>43</sup> S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 109 n. 51, 135.

<sup>44</sup> See Fotopoulos, *Food Offered to Idols*, 71-92.

<sup>45</sup> Dennis E. Smith, "Social Obligation in the Context of Communal Meals: A Study of the Christian Meal in 1 Corinthians in Comparison with Graeco-Roman Meals" (Unpublished Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1980), 34-35.

<sup>46</sup> Helmut Merklein, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (ÖTK; Gütersloh and Würzburg: Gütersloher Verlagshaus and Mohn and Echter Verlag, 1992/2000), 2:169.

<sup>47</sup> Merklein, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 2:169.

<sup>48</sup> Gerd Theissen, "The Strong and the Weak in Corinth: A Sociological Analysis of a Theological Quarrel," in *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 121-39; Merklein states, "Die »Schwachen«, die an der Praxis der Wissenden Anstoß nahmen, lassen sich kaum schicht- oder parteispezifisch eingrenzen. Aufs Ganze gesehen, wird man die »Schwachen« eher unter den einfachen Leuten zu suchen haben" (*Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 2:169).

<sup>49</sup> So, too, Wendell L. Willis, *Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline Argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10* (Chico, CA: Scholar's Press, 1985), 68; Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (EKKNT; Neukirchen-Vluyn and Düsseldorf: Neukirchener Verlag and Benziger Verlag, 1991/1995/1999), 2:221.

<sup>50</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans and Paternoster, 2000), 632.

<sup>51</sup> Smit, "1 Cor 8:1-6: A Rhetorical Partitio," 577-91; Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 2:225; Eriksson, *Traditions*, 135-40.

<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, no general Hellenistic rhetorical treatises in Greek have survived, a fact which necessitates the use of Latin rhetorical treatises to elucidate Paul's argumentation. Although Quintilian, as well as Cicero and the author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (falsely attributed to Cicero), were Roman orators whose works were composed in Latin, these authors all based their work on Hellenistic Greek rhetorical theory. See, e.g., the comments in Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 5.14.32; Cicero, *De Inventione* 1.35.61, *De Inventione* 2.2.8, *De Optimo Genere Oratorum*, *Topica*;

and *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 2.2.1-2. Moreover, Cicero's *De Inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* also both appear to have used a common Latin source that was probably a translation of a Greek work originating from Rhodes. In fact, Greek teachers of oratory in Rome were quite in vogue and were considered far superior to Roman orators. Cicero himself even sent his son to Athens where he received rhetorical training from the Greek orator Gorgias the Younger. Thus, the use of Roman rhetorical theory to evaluate Paul's use of Greek rhetoric is most appropriate. Anderson Jr. rightly concludes, "Roman rhetorical theory is, therefore, often no more than an adaptation of Greek rhetorical theory" (Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul*, 67). For more on the relationship between Hellenistic Greek and Roman rhetorical theories, see Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul*, 67-107.

<sup>53</sup> Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 4.5.1.

<sup>54</sup> Abraham Malherbe, "Exhortation in First Thessalonians," *NovT* (1983), 238-56; idem, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (LEC 4; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986). Cicero, *De Inventione* 2.2.8, when commenting that there were two schools making their own use of rhetoric in the time of Aristotle, writes that one was "busy with philosophy, but devoting some attention to the art of rhetoric as well, the other devoted entirely to the study and teaching of oratory, were fused into one group by later teachers who took into their own writings what they thought was correct from both sources."

<sup>55</sup> Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987).

<sup>56</sup> So Willis, *Idol Meat*, 68-70; Paul D. Gardner, *The Gifts of God and the Authentication of a Christian: An Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 8-11:1* (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1994), 22-23; Richter, "Anstößige Freiheit in Korinth," 562-63; Eriksson, *Traditions*, 150-51.

<sup>57</sup> So Hurd, *Origins*, 69; C.K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 187; Conzelmann, *First Corinthians*, 140; Fee, *First Epistle*, 363; Gooch, *Dangerous Food*, 62; Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 2:225; Cheung, *Idol Food*, 122; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 260-61; Andreas Lindemann, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (HNT 9.1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 190; Merklein, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 2:179.

<sup>58</sup> Willis, *Idol Meat*, 69-70; Gardner, *Gifts*, 22-23. Γινώσις as a noun occurs ten times in 1 Corinthians while the verbs γινώσκω and εἶδω (to know) are also used frequently; cf. 1 Cor 1:5; 3:16; 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19; 8:1; 7, 10, 11; 12:8; 13:2, 8, 9; 14:6; 15:34.

<sup>59</sup> Chrysostom, PG 61.161. It is significant that although Chrysostom

does not identify Corinthian quotations being cited by Paul in his instructions in 8:1-9, he does recognize that some of these verses echo Corinthian positions. See, e.g., Chrysostom, PG 61.159-162.

<sup>60</sup> Theodoret's quotations are from PG.

<sup>61</sup> Fee, *First Corinthians*, 370, n. 5; Fotopoulos, *Food Offered to Idols*.

<sup>62</sup> Scholars who consider verse 4b-c as Corinthian positions: Hans Lietzmann, *An die Korinther I/II* (rev. W. G. Kümmel; HNT 9; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1949), 37; Frederik W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), 188; Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 191; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 370-71; Gooch, *Dangerous Food*, 62-63; Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 2:221; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 188; Richter, "Anstößige Freiheit in Korinth," 562-63; Otfried Hofius, "'Einer ist Gott – Einer ist der Herr': Erwägungen zu Struktur und Aussage des Bekenntnisses 1 Kor 8:6," in *Eschatologie und Schöpfung* (eds. M. Evang, H. Merklein, and M. Wolter; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 99-101.

<sup>63</sup> Willis, *Idol Meat*, 83-87; Cheung, *Idol Food*, 123.

<sup>64</sup> Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 632.

<sup>65</sup> Willis, *Idol Meat*, 86, calls v. 5b "Paul's own qualification."

<sup>66</sup> Conzelmann, *First Corinthians*, 144, calls v. 6 a "formula of confession" whose phrasing has not been chosen by Paul and whose content is not Pauline. Other scholars refer to it as a pre-Pauline or Pauline creedal statement. For example, Schrage writes, "Paulus will durch das Zitat der urchristlichen Formel keine weltanschauliche These über die Existenz nur eines Gottes vortragen" (*Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 2:241).

<sup>67</sup> Conzelmann, *First Corinthians*, 144, calls it the "Jewish confession εἷς θεός"; Eriksson, *Traditions*, 123; Cheung, *Idol Food*, 122; Merklein, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 2:188.

<sup>68</sup> Eriksson, *Traditions*, 154.

<sup>69</sup> Eriksson, *Traditions*, 123.

<sup>70</sup> Hofius, "'Einer ist Gott – Einer ist der Herr,'" 99-101; Richter, "Anstößige Freiheit in Korinth," 562-63.

<sup>71</sup> Merklein, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 2:192.

<sup>72</sup> Fee, *First Corinthians*, 379-80; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 639.

<sup>73</sup> Weiß, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, 229; Murphy-O'Connor, "Food and Spiritual Gifts," 296-97; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 382, n. 34; Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 195 considers this meaning to be acceptable.

<sup>74</sup> For a list of past scholars who see v. 8 as a Corinthian slogan, see Hurd, 68; To this list may be added Barrett, *First Corinthians*,

195, who states that Paul quotes from the Corinthians' beliefs, and qualifies and approves them; Murphy-O'Connor, "Food and Spiritual Gifts," 292-98; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 382-84; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 199; Gooch, *Dangerous Food*, 63; Cheung, *Idol Food*, 134.

<sup>75</sup> Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 195; So, too, Willis, *Idol Meat*, 97-98; Eriksson, *Traditions*, 161; Cheung, *Idol Food*, 134-36.

<sup>76</sup> Smit, "The Rhetorical Disposition," 482; A representative of this scholarly view is Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 199, who states: "Paul does not dispute that the Corinthians have a right to eat such food, so far as food is concerned. Chs. 8-10 make clear how far from Judaism Paul had moved on the matter of food." But 1 Corinthians 8-10 convey the opposite, that is, Paul understands intentional idol-food consumption to be idolatry which also causes the weak brother for whom Christ died to perish.

<sup>77</sup> Richard A. Horsley, "Consciousness and Freedom among the Corinthians: 1 Corinthians 8-10," *CBQ* 40 (1978), 579-81; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 384.

<sup>78</sup> Smit, "The Rhetorical Disposition," 482.

<sup>79</sup> Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 2:261.

<sup>80</sup> Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 4.2.31.

<sup>81</sup> Lindemann states that "In 10 nennt Paulus einen konkret möglichen Fall...." (*Der erste Korintherbrief*, 196).

<sup>82</sup> Conzelmann: "the conclusion from what precedes" (*First Corinthians*, 149); Fee: "Paul brings this opening argument to its conclusion" (*First Corinthians*, 389); Willis: "Paul's conclusion to his first discussion of eating sacrificial meat" (*Idol Meat*, 108); Lindemann: "In 13 zieht Paulus die abschließende Folgerung...." (*Der erste Korintherbrief*, 198).

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## **The Temptation of Judas: Church and National Identities**

PANTELEIMON KALAITZIDIS

I would like first to express my deep gratitude to Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology for organizing this International Conference on Biblical Studies and for inviting me to participate in this gathering in honor of Professor Savas Agourides. Let me state that I am not a biblical scholar. My work and publications have been in the area of systematic theology. Nevertheless, I consider it a great privilege to participate in this symposium in honor of Professor Agourides whose theology has significantly influenced my thinking. In fact, just as Professor Agourides has connected biblical studies with other areas of theology, so also have I tried to assimilate biblical insights in my theological work. This is probably why I am here today among noted biblical scholars to speak on my topic, "The Temptation of Judas," in relationship to the contemporary life and mission of the Church of Greece.

In Christian theology and worship, as well as popular piety and literature, the personality and act of Judas remain the archetype of guilt<sup>1</sup> and betrayal. Judas, "the son of perdition,"<sup>2</sup> is the archetype of denial and apostasy. Anything related to this archetype must be shunned as being opposite to the attributes of the faithful Christian, who has decided according to the baptismal formula "to be joined to Christ." In many cases the collective will, or illusion, to escape and be differentiated from the archetype of Judas, has been ex-



pressed by enactments and frenzied manifestations such as the burning of Judas' effigy.<sup>3</sup> Such acts, apart from the fact that they undoubtedly contain the elements of popular anti-Semitism, interest us here from a different perspective. Despite the cries and the fantasy of being differentiated from the prototype of Judas, in fact, what is eventually shown in our spiritual life, or the lack of it, is that we are all potentially Judas to the degree that we adopt his criteria and priorities. It is tragic to realize that, whereas we passionately condemn and abhor Judas, nonetheless the way we perceive Christianity, as well as the role and mission of the Church today, discloses that we have unintentionally adopted *mutatis mutandis* Judas' messianic religio-nationalistic views. What I am suggesting is that we import through the back door the otherwise condemned heresy of ethnophyletism in the life of the Church of Greece.

The reason why I engage Judas in the study of the relationship between Church and nation, is that many of us, Orthodox Christians, baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, succumb, without knowing it or without wanting it, to the *temptation of Judas*. The temptation in question does not refer to the act of betrayal which has as its motive an alluring sum of money, but to the unconscious adoption of criteria and priorities that Judas incarnated in a characteristic and tragic way, and which led him to betray Jesus Christ. This latter clarification is absolutely essential to make clear the views that this paper upholds.

### **The Betrayal of Judas and the Zealot Nationalistic Movement**

Indeed, Judas' motivation to betray Christ appears to be not merely financial; thirty silver pieces, after all, did not represent a significant amount of money. The Gospel accounts, the comments by the Holy Fathers, and the hymns of Holy

Week, all, of course, emphasize this element.<sup>4</sup> However, it is more likely that the thirty pieces of silver signify the outcome of a long internal process by which Judas doubted and rejected the messianic model his teacher adopted. The monetary sum was perhaps also the confirmation and guarantee of the agreement he had made with the religious authorities. As long as Judas followed Jesus, and took part in the community of his disciples, he was, according to the Gospel of John, their treasurer.<sup>5</sup> He showed considerable ardor in avoiding any unnecessary, according to his opinion, waste of money, as in the case of Mary, Lazarus' sister, who anointed Jesus with expensive ointment.<sup>6</sup> If we, therefore, wish to seek the deeper motive of Judas' betrayal, we must not only settle on Judas' uncontested stinginess; we must also examine his relation to the Zealot movement.

Many interpreters and historians of the New Testament era agree that Judas kept a close relationship with this movement. More particularly, the main cause of his betrayal seems to be his bitter disappointment about his messianic dream, that is, that Jesus refused to identify his own mission with the overthrow of Roman tyranny and the fulfillment of the national restoration of Judaism in Palestine.<sup>7</sup> In Jesus' time the Zealot movement expressed exactly the dreams of a national and political independence of Judaism and the concurrent radical rejection of Roman domination.

This dispute, however, was based on the Jewish expectation of a political Messiah on the one hand, and on a political theology of a theocratic character on the other. The Zealots supported the view that, as God is the only master and ruler of his people, any form of recognition of Caesar's rule over Palestine,<sup>8</sup> such as paying taxes to Rome, was anathema. That is why they considered it their religious duty to prevent others from paying the appointed tax. They were also ready for revolt and war with Rome, if Rome persisted in the enslavement of the people of God, as Professor Agourides

writes in his *History of the New Testament Times*.<sup>9</sup>

According to Josephus, such a revolt took place in A.D. 6 when Judas the Galilean, under the pretence of opposing the census by Quirinius, incited the people against the Roman authority.<sup>10</sup> The census was viewed as a sign of recognition of Roman domination and Caesar's rule over God and his people. The revolt was eventually suppressed, Judas the Galilean murdered and his followers scattered.<sup>11</sup> The severest revolts against Rome, with strong participation by the Zealots and other resistance groups, took place in A.D. 66-73 (the Jewish War) and again in A.D. 132-135 (the revolt of Bar Kochba).<sup>12</sup>

Examination of the details of the relations between the various resistance movements in Jesus' time would lead us in directions leading away from the topic at hand, and experts at present cannot give definite answers to the problem pertaining to the period of the two major revolts. However, we need to note that the Zealot revolutionary movement was connected to the *Sicarii*, who, during their armed struggle against the Romans, used a special knife called *sicus* in Latin. It was from this term that the word *Sicarius*, meaning sword-bearer or executioner, is derived.<sup>13</sup> Many interpreters and historians, following Cullmann's thesis, believe that the surname *Iskariotis* is derived from the same root.<sup>14</sup> According to this position, the surname *Iskariotis* cannot refer to Judas' place of origin, as held by both ancient and modern exegetical traditions, because there is no evidence for such a location or settlement named Iskarioth or Karioth in Palestine. On the contrary, *Iskariotis* (as well as the variants *Iskarioth*, *Skarioth*, *Skariotis*) seems to be a corruption of *Sikariotis* or *Sicarios* and seems to relate to the Zealotic activity of Jesus' disciple.<sup>15</sup> Other disciples of Jesus may also have come from the movement of Zealots, too, such as "Simon, who was called the Zealot."<sup>16</sup> That is why three terms have been proposed as references for the Judean resistance against Roman

rule: the Greek word ζηλωτής, the Aramaic word “*kenana*” (with its Hellenized form *Kananaïos* or *Kananites*) and the Latin word “*sicarius*”.<sup>17</sup>

I do not propose to affirm the precise character or legitimacy of these interpretations, because discussion among biblical scholars continues. I can, however, come to some preliminary conclusions: (a) that it is beyond doubt that some ex-Zealots participated in Jesus’ movement; (b) that among them was Judas *Iskariotis*, by evidence of either his surname or his conduct and mentality; and (c) that many of Jesus’ sayings and parables<sup>18</sup> were explicitly or implicitly of an anti-Zealot character and intended to convey the message that the ultimate initiative in bringing out the kingdom belonged to God. According to Professor Karavidopoulos,

...man can in no way force God to hasten the coming of his kingdom, neither through the faithful keeping of the Law, as the Pharisees believed, nor through raw violence against the Romans as the Zealots wished, nor through exact calculations of the time that the current form of the world will be destroyed, as the apocalyptic writers figured.<sup>19</sup>

Jesus’ well-known answer to the trap question made by the Pharisees and the Herodians about paying the tax to Caesar or not, carries relevant implications: “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”<sup>20</sup> Despite its clear anti-Zealot character, Jesus’ answer does not provide theological cover for collaboration with the conqueror. Rather, it transfers the discussion to another level. It puts the faithful person’s obligations and relations with God and the world on a hierarchical scale. It indicates that man cannot force God to hasten the coming of his kingdom, which will not come through revolutionary violence. The initiative for the coming of this new world is up to God. As a consequence, the acknowledgement of Caesar’s authority and paying taxes to him restricts the principalities and authorities of this era into

a clearly prescribed framework and does not allow them to claim what does not belong to them. In other words, worldly powers cannot occupy the position and place that belong to God and demand the worship that is due to God alone. With his striking answer, Jesus, apart from escaping the trap that the religious leadership set up for him, seems to preclude the danger of a double idolatry: that of a secular state claiming for itself what belongs to God; and that of worship of the state in the place of God by identifying the state with God. This latter point concerns especially the Zealots and the subject of this paper as well.

### **The Religio-Nationalistic Messianism and Secular Eschatology of the Zealots**

Leaving some important issues aside, such as the relations of Zealots with Pharisees, Essenes, and Maccabees,<sup>21</sup> I will now examine another side of the Zealot movement. It is a dimension that appears to have greatly influenced Judas and that directly concerns our subject. I am speaking of the Zealots' messianic expectations and Judas' adoption of them.<sup>22</sup>

The Zealots expected a Messiah-King, invested with secular power and authority, whose main mission was to violently overthrow Roman domination and the complicit Judean oligarchy, and thus lead the Hebrew people to national restoration, social justice and fulfillment of its historical expectations.<sup>23</sup> The messianic prototype was a Davidic Messiah with attributes of royalty and political power. The Zealots were inspired by a religio-nationalistic messianism, a worldly vision of messianism, which looked to the reestablishment of David's kingdom. The liberation from sin and the preaching of repentance in the coming of God's kingdom<sup>24</sup> were not priorities for this kind of messianism. The priorities were national liberation and vindication of the sacred national

and religious tradition of Judaism. Even more, this worldly messianism identified the coming of God's kingdom with Israel's national restoration. The notion of a Messiah without secular power, a Messiah who preached repentance, love, and forgiveness of enemies, and a Messiah who inaugurated a kingdom different from the kingdoms of this world, was completely inconceivable. Zealotism and relevant theocratic nationalisms substitute authentic messianism (the foundation of eschatology) with a secular messianism of nation and race. In such cases, there is a shift in eschatological perspective, from the creative tension between the historical and meta-historical to a suffocating worldly intra-historical framework of secular kingdom and national vindication.

Judas appears to be influenced by these messianic views as an erstwhile follower of Zealotism. This worldly messianism can be traced to his decision to betray Jesus because of the latter's refusal to assume the role of a secular king and national liberator. Judas' initial enthusiasm about his Teacher's dynamic and impressive presence, which was accompanied by seemingly revolutionary preaching and miraculous healing, was followed by disappointment about the image which Jesus presented at the end of his public ministry. Judas eventually broke with Jesus because, instead of exploiting the prestige and popularity that healings and miracles had accorded to Jesus and moving on to overturn Roman dominance and Judaic oligarchy, Jesus not only refused to put his miraculous powers in the service of the national-religious messianic vision, but also preached a suffering Messiah, deprived of any kind of secular power or authority, who was to be persecuted and rejected. He turned into a Messiah who came to forgive people's sins and inaugurate a spiritual kingdom. He became a Messiah who not only showed lack of regard for the nation's problems, but who also differentiated himself from the received tradition of the religious leadership, the depositories of the sacred national and religious

heritage.

Judas not only succumbed eventually to the three temptations that Jesus rejected in the wilderness (miracle, mystery, authority), but also hastened to “correct” Christ’s work. In Judas’ case, the desire to bring about the “correction” fomented a plan and prepared the path of betrayal. Judas betrayed the Teacher for what he believed to be religious inconsistency and the betrayal of the Judaic nation and messianic promise. He decided to intervene, therefore, and assumed the burden of defending the nation’s history and tradition, secretly aligning himself with the religious leadership, the authority which guarded the nation’s sacred tradition. Judas acted as a disappointed Zealot ideologist, seized by theocratic nationalism and worldly messianism, which in his view were contradicted by Christ’s preaching and conduct. This is suggested by the whole course of events, the return of the thirty silver pieces, the regret (without true repentance) and finally Judas’ suicide, which point to ideological reasons rather than simple greed as his motivation.

### **Analogies with the Present Ecclesiastical Situation in Greece**

The analogy with the present ecclesiastical realities in Greece seems obvious. In traditional Orthodox countries, the Church faces, if it has not already succumbed to, Judas’ temptation. I do not just refer to the known problem of ethno-phyletism and the illusion of identifying every “Orthodox” nation with the truth of the Orthodox faith. There are deeper and graver consequences: a) the distortion of the Church’s identity and self-consciousness; b) the constriction of the Church within an immanent historical perspective and the consequent loss of its eschatological identity; c) the restriction of its mission to fulfill the eternal destinies of nations; d) the transformation of the proclamation of God’s coming

kingdom into a proclamation of national salvation and preservation of an imagined glorious ethno-religious past; and e) finally the substitution of the history of salvation and the history of divine economy with the history of national regeneration. In what follows I will not attempt a comprehensive examination of the considerable problems presented by the relations between the Church and nations. What I will attempt is to draw some comparison with Judas' and Jewish Zealotism's views about nation and Messiah. In my remarks, I will confine myself mainly to the Greek ecclesiastical reality, which *mutatis mutandis* hold true also for the rest of the "Orthodox world," without suggesting any form of negative exclusiveness.

A hundred and eighty years after the 1821 Revolution<sup>25</sup> and the beginning of the end of the "kenotic" period of the Church under Ottoman subjugation, during which, due to exceptional historical circumstances, the Church undertook to preserve the nation, the Church in Greece seems unable to escape the syndrome of identifying with the nation. It is unable to see its work and its general historical course as distinct from the course of the nation. It also appears to remain unaware of the fact that this identification with the nation and national ideology has been imposed on the Church by the state, to serve the state's own purposes, which gradually have become the Church's purpose, too.<sup>26</sup> Thus, in the official ecclesiastical discourse, Orthodoxy and Hellenism signify exactly the same thing (for example, as in the slogan "Greece means Orthodoxy!"). The limits of Church are confused with the limits of nation, while simultaneously the Greeks are considered to be the new chosen race of God. The words of Jesus "the hour has come that the Son of man should be glorified"<sup>27</sup> in his encounter with the Greeks are interpreted through the lenses of racial criteria and historical anachronism. Indeed, as much as the Greek state seeks to adapt to international realities and takes politically con-



venient steps to divorce itself from the Church, the Church seeks to defend itself by appeals to the past and its contribution to the "struggles of the nation," in order to guard its exclusive relationship and symbiosis with the *ethnos*. As the Greek state is gradually denationalized, as a result of the wider realignments due to globalization and multiculturalism, the Church in Greece is more emphatically nationalized, because of a growing sense of insecurity that results from the loss of the special legal relationship to the state and the exclusive relationship with the nation.<sup>28</sup>

These phenomena unfortunately relate not only to a crisis of ecclesiastical policy, manifestations of anachronism, and religious fundamentalism. They also underline something deeper: the inversion of priorities (Christ or the nation? God's kingdom or the nation's continuity?), the loss of the Church's catholicity and universality, and the unconscious adoption of a worldly eschatology. The dominant ecclesiastical message today does not portray the sense of loss or failure that results from the intimate connection of Church and nation; on the contrary, the Church delights in appealing to this dimension, for example in books and publications about the clergy's participation in the armed struggle of 1821, the Macedonian conflict, and the Asia Minor disaster. In the process the Church does not seem to realize the distance that separates these actions from Jesus' behavior in similar cases and ignores the totally exceptional (κατ' οἰκονομίαν) character that the ecclesial conscience always attributed to the participation of the clergy in armed struggle.

However, how far is such an ecclesiastical message and the consequent ecclesiastical practice from Judas' temptation and theocratic nationalism as presented above? Would it possibly be an exaggeration to claim that, what Jesus Christ denied (confinement within a narrow national frame, national exclusiveness, restriction into a worldly messianism), *mutatis mutandis* seems to be pursued by the official

Church today? Indeed, the temptations that Christ rejected in the wilderness appear acceptable to the institutional Church. There is a difference: instead of transforming stones into bread, the Church flirts with both: attempting to show that Macedonia is Greek, and organizing massive gatherings to demand the inclusion of religious denomination on identity cards.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, the Roman conquerors have been replaced successively by the Turks, Bulgarians, Germans, the European Union, the New World Order, the United States, NATO, etc. The nationalistic liberation that Christ denied to Judas and the Zealots, is, by analogy, the nationalistic liberation effected by Theodore Kolokotronis or Papaflessas<sup>30</sup> in the Revolution of 1821. These efforts, which restrict the catholicity and space of Christian freedom, are accepted and proudly projected by our own Church, and are also invoked as a token of its fidelity to Orthodoxy (Hellenic Orthodoxy). What Judas did not find in the person of Jesus and his spiritual messianism is generously offered today by the Church, with its continuous preoccupation with worldly matters of foreign policy, the continuity of the Greek nation and Greek homogeneity, the demographic problem of incorporating immigrants, identity cards, and the like.

The logical and natural consequence of the above is to identify the religious and the ethnic dimensions. Thus, national and Christian identity are considered as something unified and indivisible, although in the end, of course, Christian identity is finally degraded to a component of national identity. "Christian" identity, in this instance, does not refer to the participation in the eucharistic and eschatological community that the Church is, and to the subsequent moral, social and political consequences which derive from incorporation into this community. The dynamics of that kind of participation remain boundless and beyond any *a priori* objective limits, especially limits imposed by nationalist attachments. "Christian" identity constrained by these limits thus refers to

an aggregate reality the boundaries of which are coextensive with those of the nation. The adjective “Christian” does not necessarily, therefore, introduce criteria and demands specified and explained by the Church for personal, social, and communal life. Rather, it is merely connected to traditional cultural and historical references. Thus, the fight for the inclusion of religious identification in identity cards ends up being a fight about national identity, marked by the spirit of fundamentalism. The co-identification of religious and national identities has tragic consequences for both religious communities and contemporary nations.<sup>31</sup>

### **From the History of the Divine Economy to the History of the National Revival**

Undoubtedly, the Church’s national role and its engagement in matters of national identity indicate a lack of eschatological perspective.<sup>32</sup> Eschatology, however, is not just the discourse about the last times or about the last chapter of Dogmatics, but also a perspective and reality related to the intrusion of the Eschaton into the present, the foretaste “from now” of the future age’s life, the active expectation of the coming kingdom. That is why we should remember the plethora of biblical references which, according to the plan of divine economy, announce the eschatological realization of the unity of all nations and their final conversion. This unity will allow the regeneration and prevalence of universal peace.<sup>33</sup> We also need to remember the fact that this unity is already present in the Church of Jesus Christ. The sin which had broken the initial unity of the human race is transcended. All manner of divisions and distinctions, concerning sexes, races, nations, and social classes are transcended according to the Pauline statement: “There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, after

Pentecost and the coming of the Paraclete, the eschatological actualization of unity is presented by ecclesiastical hymnology as a palpable reality, an overcoming of the division in languages and nations brought about by the arrogance of the Tower of Babel. The kontakion of the Feast of Pentecost proclaims: *"Once, when He descended and confounded the tongues, the Most High divided the nations; and when He divided the tongues of fire, He called all men into unity; and with one accord, we glorify the All-holy Spirit."* To be precise, this unity is part of the plan of divine economy, where notions of exclusiveness, chosen people, and hereditary adoption are abolished, as excellently depicted in the prophetic book of Jonah as well as in Paul's Epistle to Romans chapters 4 and 9-11. Professor N. Matsoukas asserts concerning these biblical texts that

This exclusiveness, which is mainly the most serious symptom of the original sin, constitutes a danger for the era of the Paraclete's Church. The corrosion of the body of the Church by the sin of exclusiveness, as an egocentric rallying point, is continuously and dangerously close... For the Apostle Paul, Israel's degradation constitutes a painful fact of the history of the divine economy... Nothing can guarantee one's place in the Church except persistence in the spirit of ecumenicity.<sup>35</sup>

However, the history of divine economy is connected with the divine manifestations in creation and history; the interventions of the preexistent and incarnated Logos; and the mission of the Holy Spirit. The ultimate goal is liberation from sin, and salvation through Christ in which all nations will participate together with Israel.<sup>36</sup> All the great events of sacred history move toward the same goal. Election and covenant, the Law and the promised land, the call of the Prophets, the sending of Jesus by the Father, the parables and the disclosure of the mysteries of the kingdom, the fulfillment of Scripture and the necessity of suffering, the para-

dox of the cross and the glory of the resurrection, the coming of the Paraclete and the apostolic ministry – all proclaim the good news of God's kingdom. It is a good news which includes all the nations and which is realized in the person of Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God.

In conventional ecclesiastical rhetoric, however, the events of the history of divine economy are not integrated in a vision transcending the consequences of sin and affirming unity beyond ethnicity. What is worse, they are symbolically connected and emotionally loaded with events and vicissitudes of our national destiny. Thus a significant shift occurs, a slide from the history of divine economy to the history of national revival, a move that is nothing other than the logical conclusion of the temptation of Judas and the Zealots' worldly messianism. Accordingly, we see that there is no great feast of the Church that is not somehow connected to some major national event and clothed with patriotic symbolism. The annunciation of the Mother of God is connected with the 1821 Greek Revolution (March 25<sup>th</sup>);<sup>37</sup> the resurrection of Christ, with the resurrection of the Greek nation after four hundred years of slavery; the dormition of the Mother of God, with the celebration of the armed forces; the exaltation of the Holy Cross, with the anniversary of the Asia Minor Catastrophe of 1922; the feast of the Holy Protection (Ἀγία Σκέπη), with the anniversary of the resistance against the Italians and the Nazis; the feast of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, with the celebration of the Air Force; the feast of St. Barbara, with the artillery; the feast of St. Artemios, with the celebration of the police forces, and so on. I stop here because the list seems endless. The most tragic thing about all this is that the Church not only cannot do anything to curb these developments (many of these "double feasts" were recently formally established), but it also seems to favor them, perhaps believing that in this way the Church comes to the center of public life and can therefore exercise

a more effective pastoral role.

According to this logic, the sacred and venerable heritage of the faith of the Church, including the Divine Liturgy, sacred symbols, Church feasts of saints and martyrs, holy relics, and so forth, become at the same time sacred and venerable objects of the race. Thus the cross, emblematic of the crucified ethos of Christ and of his denial of self and every worldly security, is now used as both a religious and national symbol. The national martyrs are often confused with the Church's neomartyrs.<sup>38</sup> The famous "double feasts" of Church and nation are concluded with a barrage of applause, the singing of the national anthem, and long-winded patriotic sermons – in a parody of both Church and nation. The reason for this is that the ecclesial dimension of the feast is lost, because it does not define, but rather is defined by, the national. The official ecclesiastical rhetoric in Greece does not preach "Jesus Christ crucified,"<sup>39</sup> "a scandal to the Jews, folly to the Greeks,"<sup>40</sup> but rather a Christ useful to the prevailing ethno-religious ideology. Thus it follows that the ecclesiastical sermon often offers a lesson in triumphalistic patriotism, as pointed out by the late Metropolitan Dionysios Psarianos. Thus, the patriotic preaching resounds more with the priorities of Judas and the Zealots, not those of Jesus.

Therefore, it was to be expected that the local Church would be transformed into national Church. One tragic result of multiracial, multicultural societies of Western Europe and America is the scandal of multiple Orthodox ecclesiastical jurisdictions (every nation must have its own Church), which is a nullification of Orthodox ecclesiology. Thus, the call for the salvation and sanctification of the world, as well as of the universe, is replaced by the sanctification and canonization of the nation. Simultaneously, the Church's tradition is turned from a renewed reality alive in the Holy Spirit into a kind of ossified folklore museum, the guardian of the nation and its verities. In addition, the mingling of nation and Church and

the substitution of the history of divine economy with the history of national renaissance produced ideas and manifestos which were distinguished for their theological and political confusion, their naïve style, and the metaphysical faith in the eternal value of Hellenism. Such a trope – typical of the climate of its era, but also of a tendency which still exists today in Greek Church and society – characterized the beginning of the twentieth century, as demonstrated by works published in Patras in which a “Creed of Hellenism” – an imitation of the Nicene Creed – appears, including elements that sink to the worship of the chthonic powers of the earth, and of race and blood. The Church in Greece has never, to my knowledge, clearly dissociated itself from such efforts:

#### NATIONAL “CREED”

I believe in one Greece, great and undivided, thrice-glorified and eternal, homeland of spirit, light and wisdom, of science, of all that is perfect; the creator of art, civilization and all progress.

And in Hellenism, this race’s intellectual strength, born of light and of Hellenic nature.

And in the Hellenic life-giving spirit, proceeding from the Hellenic light, and through the light of civilization filling the world and illuminating humanity from earliest ages; and produced by the Hellenic earth, and teaching civilization in the midst of barbarism.

And in the invincibility of this spirit’s power, unconquered, neither humiliated, nor lacking ever in the terrible national trials throughout the ages; rather ever living and radiant, shining forth from a single corner of the Fatherland, ever growing without change or diminishment.

In the new shining of the paternal spirit with the same excellent wealth of wisdom, science, and art.

And in our National Divine Religion, always maintaining intact our nationalism and language in all the terrible storms of our race, and unbreakably bonded with the existence and grandeur of the Nation.

I expect the inevitable dominance of Hellenism, just as in the past so also in the present, against all enemies and all obstacles, and its secure final triumph against all adversaries.

May the grandeur of old of our Fatherland and the invincible glory, power, and beauty of our Resurrected Nations endure unto all the ages.

Amen!<sup>41</sup>

### **Towards a New Relation Between Church and Nation**

The word of God commands: "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image... You shall not bow down to them nor serve them."<sup>42</sup> Is not this command applicable in every way to the above "National Creed" which borrows the language of the creed of Orthodox dogmatics and not only introduces ethnophyletism, but also the paganization of people and nation? I wonder: does not the Old Testament commandment, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain,"<sup>43</sup> militate against the illicit confusion of God with the nation? Could it not be a warning to us about the disastrous consequences of theocratic nationalism, which was tragically embodied by Judas and the Zealots, and which continues to survive today under a Christian cloak?<sup>44</sup> If we change the persons



and names, the geographic and chronological coordinates, then Judas' temptation and denial certainly concerns all of us too, who identify national freedom with Christian freedom, Greece with Orthodoxy, nation with Church, national identity with Christian identity. However, as Bishop of Diokleia Kallistos Ware characteristically points out:

By respecting national identity, we must not forget that the Church, in its deeper essence, is One and Catholic. The basic element in the structure of Church on earth is not the nation, but the local ecclesial assembly, the gathering around the bishop every Sunday for the performance of the divine Eucharist. And this eucharistic gathering has to unite all Christians in a given place, independent of their national origin. According to the holy canons, the bishop has the responsibility not of a national group, but of a specific area. The Church as a eucharistic community is not organized on a national basis, but on a local basis. As a result, the national dimension must serve the Church, not enslave it.<sup>46</sup>

The aim, therefore, is to define the correct hierarchy of criteria and priorities in the relationship between the ecclesiastical and national dimensions, as well as the clear marking of their respective boundaries and their interrelationships. Neither should the nation be identified with the Church, nor the Church with the nation. However, as long as history exists, nations will exist too. The notions of nation and Church involve a dialectic relationship, since they entail an irreconcilable and counterbalancing dynamic. The nation originated from the breakdown and fragmentation of human unity, while the Church prepares and actualizes eschatologically the path to unity. The nation separates those who were initially united, while the Church unites those which were previously separated. Of course, it is not easy to deny the positive elements of the symbiosis of Church and people. Nor can one underestimate the fact that we are dealing with a people's Church, implying significant historical and social

commitments. However much the thirst of peoples for freedom and justice may be legitimate, it is equally necessary for the Church to take care so as not to be transformed into a temporal movement of liberation facing a deadline.

In the end, as regards the subject of nation, the issue is whether the course of the official Church in Greece, and perhaps the Church in other Orthodox countries, bears elements of historical sin in the sense of missing the mark and failure to adequately conform to its salvific mandate. Is it perhaps possible that the continuous self-involvement of the Church with the issues of the nation betrays a loss of the eschatological identity of the Church and a turn to inner-worldly and historically contingent matters? Does the entanglement of ecclesiastical discourse in the structures and forms of this age perhaps constitute an acceptance of Judas' and the Zealots' claims for and expectations of an ethno-religious messianism? The problem arose at the moment the Church was established within the world and began to seek justification for its mission by resorting to the historical past. In this way the Church, overemphasizing the "already" and forgetting the "not yet" of its nature and mission, becomes passionate about realities such as nation and race which are destined to be superseded and die in the eschatological end.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> J. Kornarakis, *Judas as a Collective Guilt Archetype* (in Greek) (Thessaloniki, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> John 17:12.

<sup>3</sup> See G.A. Megas, "Judas in Popular Traditions" (in Greek), *Epetiris tou Laographikou Archeiou*, 3-4 (1941-42), 3-32.

<sup>4</sup> One can find these texts and extracts together with a commentary in P.D. Loukeris, *Judas the Iscariot and His Place in the Mystery of the "Divine Economy"* (in Greek) (Athens, 1991), 33ff.

<sup>5</sup> John 13:29; cf. John 12:6.

<sup>6</sup> John 12:3-5; cf. Matt 26:6-9 and Mark 14:3-5. See also G. Patronos, *Discipleship and Apostolicity* (in Greek) (Athens, 1999), 103. idem, "Je-

sus Christ and Judas, or How Judas Conceived His Teacher as a Messiah" (in Greek), *Diavasis* 24 (2000): 23; Savas Agourides, "The Betrayal of Judas" (in Greek), *E Kathimerini* 1 March 2001, supplement "Seven Days."

<sup>7</sup> On these topics see several aspects in: J. Karavidopoulos, "The Arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane According to the Narration of the Evangelist Luke (22:39-53)" (in Greek), *Epistimoniki Epetiris Theologikis Scholis Aristoteleiou Panepistimiou Thessalonikis* 15 (1970), 215-216. The relation between Judas and Jesus has recently been interpreted in a different way in the following works: C. Soullard ed., *Judas* (Paris, 1999), and A. Abécassiss, *Judas et Jésus. Une liaison dangereuse* (Paris, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, ed. L. H. Feldman, XVIII, 23-24.

<sup>9</sup> See S. Agourides, *History of the New Testament Times* (in Greek) (Thessaloniki, 1983), 348-349. Cf. J. Karavidopoulos, *The Gospel according to Mark* (in Greek) *The New Testament Interpretation*, 2 (Thessaloniki, 1993), 382.

<sup>10</sup> Josephus, *Jewish War*, II, 117-118 (ed. H. St. J. Thackeray). – idem, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII, 4-5 (ed. L. H. Feldman).

<sup>11</sup> See Acts 5:37.

<sup>12</sup> From the ample bibliography on this issue we select the following: Savas Agourides, *History of the New Testament Times*, 284-290; S. W. Baron, *Histoire d'Israël. Vie sociale et religieuse*, vol. 2 (trans. V. Nikiprowetzky ; Paris, 1957), 711-715, 720-726 ; J. Derenbourg, *Essai sur l'histoire et la géographie de la Palestine d'après les thalmuds et les autres sources rabbiniques*, (Paris, 1867), 247-250; A. H. J. Gunneweg, *The History of Israel until the Bar-Kochba Revolt*, 5th revised edition, (trans. J. Mourtziros; Thessaloniki, 1997), 387-399 (in Greek); M. Noth, *The History of Israel*, (trans. St. Godman, New York, 1958), 430-452; W.O.E. Oesterley, *A History of Israel*, vol II, (Oxford, 1957), 440-451, 459-463; St. Perowne, *The Political Background of the New Testament*, (London, 1965), 126-192; P. Prigent, *La fin de Jerusalem*, (Neuchatel, 1969).

<sup>13</sup> See Acts 21:38. Cf. Josephus, *Jewish War*, II, 254-257 (ed. H. St. Thackeray); idem., *Antiquities of the Jews*, XX, 185-188 (ed.. L. H. Feldman) ; V. Nikiprowetzky, "Sicaires et Zélotes. Une reconsidération", *Semitica*, 23/1973, 57-63 ; A. Paul, *Le monde des Juifs à l'heure de Jésus. Histoire politique*, (Paris, 1981), 216-220; A. Glavinas, *Church History*, v. I, (Thessaloniki, 1995), 73.

<sup>14</sup> See O. Cullmann, *Dieu et César*, (Neuchatel-Paris, 1956), 18 ; idem., "Le douzieme apôtre", *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses*, 1962, 137-140. Cf. A. Glavinas, op. cit., 73-74.

<sup>15</sup> See, on the contrary: M. Hengel, *Die Zeloten. Untersuchungen zur*

*jüdischen Freiheitsbewegung in der Zeit von Herodes*, I bis 70 n. Chr., (Leiden, 1976), 49, n. 3. For a sampling of hermeneutical comments and bibliography, see P. D. Loukeris, *Judas the Iscariot*, p. 25-26, 122-123. One should note that Loukeris seems to attribute to Cullmann the view that the surname Iscariot denotes birthplace and signifies the one who comes from the city Carioth (see p. 25 and reference to Cullman's article, p. 122, n. 38).

<sup>16</sup> Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13. See also the variations in the manuscripts "Σίμων ο Καναναῖος or Κανανίτης" for the respective person in Mark 3:18 (where the adjective Καναναῖος or Κανανίτης does not denote origin from Cana, as erroneously interpreted earlier, but it is the Aramaic rendering of the word zealot with the addition of a Greek suffix, according to the clarifications of O. Cullmann, "Le douzieme apotre," 134; idem., *Dieu et Cesar*, 17-18. Cf. A. Paul, *Le monde de Juifs à l'heure de Jésus*, 216-219; J. Karavidopoulos, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 148; cf. also the variation in Itala manuscripts, Matt 10:3: "Judas Zelotes."

<sup>17</sup> O. Cullmann, *Dieu et Cesar*, 17-18; A. Paul, *Le monde de Juifs à l'heure de Jésus*, 218-219.

<sup>18</sup> Like the parable of the seed which augments on its own, Mark 4:26.

<sup>19</sup> J. Karavidopoulos, *op. cit.*, 176-177.

<sup>20</sup> Mark 12:13-17; Matt 22:15-22; Luke 20:20-26. Hermeneutical analysis of the relevant fragment of Mark, in J. Karavidopoulos, *op. cit.*, 381-384; cf. also 176-178.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, W. R. Farmer, *Maccabees, Zealots and Josephus. An Inquiry into Jewish Nationalism in the Greco-Roman Period*, New York, 1956; A.H.J. Gunneweg, *The History of Israel until the Bar-Cochba Revolt*, 390-391; S. Agourides, *History of the N. T. Times*, 348-349.

<sup>22</sup> In the two following paragraphs (The Messianism of the Zealots and Judas) I have been inspired by the exceptional analysis by G. Patronos, *Discipleship and Apostolicity*, 42, 103-105; and idem., "Jesus Christ and Judas, or how Judas conceived his Teacher as a Messiah", 21-25.

<sup>23</sup> This is the way S.G.F. Brandon imagines Jesus in his work, *Jesus and the Zealots. A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity*, (Manchester, 1967). In his opinion, Jesus was the Messiah who fought, even with arms, for the spiritual revival and the political independence of his nation before being sentenced to death by the Romans.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Matt 6:33; Luke 12:31.

<sup>25</sup> The revolution of the Greek people against the Turkish yoke, a revolution that inaugurated the political liberation and the making of the modern Greek state.

<sup>26</sup> For the history of the adoption of the national ideology by the Church of Greece, see C. Frazee, *The Orthodox Church and Independent Greece*

(1821-1852), (Cambridge 1969); cf. I. Petrou, *Church and Politics in Greece 1750-1909*, (Thessaloniki, 1992), 141ff. (in Greek); and A. Manidakis, *The Relations between the Church and the State-Nation in the Shadow of the Identity-Cards Conflict*, (Athens, 2000), 21-56 (in Greek). For a comparative study of this phenomenon in the Balkan countries, see P. Kitromilidis, "'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans," in *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality*, (ed. M. Veremis; London and Athens, 1990), 51-60.

<sup>27</sup> John 12:23.

<sup>28</sup> A. Manidakis, *op. cit.*, p.17.

<sup>29</sup> From the time of the Nazi occupation of Greece, during the Second World War, until very recently, Greek identity cards included the religious denomination of citizens. This practice was abolished by the Greek government in May of 2000, despite intense reaction and the opposition of the Church of Greece.

<sup>30</sup> Heroes of the Greek revolution of 1821, among the most famous and highly esteemed by the Greek people.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, St. Zoumboulakis, *The God in the City. Essays on Religion and Politics*, (Athens, 2002), 11-47 (in Greek); G. Kepel, *La revanche de Dieu. Chrétiens, juifs et musulmans à la reconquête du monde*, (Paris, 1991); A. Maalouf, *Les identités meurtrières*, (Paris, 1999); J. Petrou, "Nationale Identität und Orthodoxie im heutigen Griechenland," in *Gottes auserwählte Völker Erwählungsvorstellungen und kollektive Selbstfindung in der Geschichte*, (ed. Alois Moisser; Frankfurt am Main, 2001), 261-271; Ph. Terzakis, *Irrationalism, Fundamentalism and Religious Revivalism: The colours of the chessboard*, (Athens, 1998) (in Greek). For the religious roots of nationalism, see P. Lekkas, *The Nationalistic Ideology. Five working hypotheses in historical sociology*, (Athens, 1996), 178-194 (in Greek).

<sup>32</sup> See an extended analysis of this aspect in my study "The Church and the Nation in Eschatological Perspective," in *Eschatology and the Church*, (ed. P. Kalaitzidis; Academy for Orthodox Theological Studies of the Holy Metropolis of Demetrias, Winter Programme 2000-01, Athens 2003), 339-373 (in Greek). Cf. P. Kalaitzidis, "Orthodoxy and modern Greek Identity. Critical Remarks from a Theological point of view," *Indiktos*, 17 (2003), 44-94 (in Greek).

<sup>33</sup> See for example Gen 12:3; Isa 2:2-5, 66:18-24; Rom 4:9-11; Gal 3:8; Eph 2:11-22.

<sup>34</sup> See Col 3:11; cf. Gal 3:26-29; cf. also *Epistle to Diognetus*, ch. 5; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Discourse 7*, PG 35, 785 C; Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogy I*, PG 91, 664 D-668 C.

<sup>35</sup> N. Matsoukas, *Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology*, v. II, (Thessaloniki

1985), 375-376.

<sup>36</sup> N. Matsoukas, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>37</sup> The anniversary of the Greek national revolution against the subjugation under the Ottoman Turks.

<sup>38</sup> The martyrs who refused to become Muslims and died for Christ during the Ottoman occupation.

<sup>39</sup> 1 Cor 2:2

<sup>40</sup> 1 Cor 1:23

<sup>41</sup> See M. Chairetos, *Reflections on the Nation, or: A Study on Ethnism*, (Patras 1905), 7-8 (in Greek).

<sup>42</sup> Exod 20:3-5.

<sup>43</sup> Exod 20:7.

<sup>44</sup> It is interesting to note that the text of the Constantinople Council (1872) connected ethnophyletism with a Judaic spirit of exclusivity. Hieromonk A. Radovic (now Metropolitan of Montenegro) spoke about "Judaic temptation" which results in the cult of the nation and of the ancestors, and which prevents the Church from realizing her catholicity and ecumenicity (cf. A. Radovic, "The catholicity of Orthodoxy. Soberness or the bottom of illogicality," in *Witness of Orthodoxy*, (Athens 1971), 36-38 (in Greek).

<sup>45</sup> Kallistos Ware, "L'unité dans la diversité. La vocation orthodoxe en Europe occidentale," *Service Orthodoxe de Presse*, 77 (Avril 1983), 14.

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**Theodore of Mopsuestia's  
Commentary on Psalm 44 (LXX):  
A Study of Exegesis and Christology'**

HARRY S. PAPPAS

**Introduction**

Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350-428) was the most outstanding biblical exegete of the ancient Christian school of Antioch in Syria. A prolific author, he composed commentaries on nearly every book of the Bible, a number of dogmatic and controversial treatises, catechetical homilies, various works on the Christian life, and many letters.<sup>2</sup> Tragically, his posthumous condemnation at the Fifth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 553, for certain deficiencies in his Christology and association with the heretical patriarch Nestorius, his pupil, led to the disappearance of most of this vast literary output. Nonetheless, if his close friend and associate John became known in the tradition of the Church as the "golden-mouth" preacher (*Chrysostomos*), Theodore became known in the Syrian Christian tradition as "the interpreter" of Scripture (*Mephashqana*).<sup>3</sup>

Theodore received his formative Christian exegetical and theological training under Diodore of Tarsus, a bishop of great erudition and ascetical endeavor who set the tone for the entire Antiochene tradition. This tradition emphasized the plain, narrative meaning of the biblical text over against the allegorical interpretation of the school in Alexandria, Egypt. At the same time, while deliberately rejecting the unbridled excesses of allegory, the Antiochenes developed



their own distinctive approach to a spiritual understanding of Scripture.<sup>4</sup> However, no one was more fervent in the application of a sober, historical approach to Scripture than Theodore.

In fact, it is in his first exegetical work, a commentary on the Book of Psalms, that Theodore rigorously applied the principles he learned under Diodore. Although the commentary was essentially lost for centuries, Robert Devréesse, a French scholar, prepared a text-critical edition of the first eighty psalms in 1939.<sup>5</sup>

Theodore's exegesis of Psalm 44 is of great importance. Psalm 44 was one of the most crucial Old Testament texts that ancient Christians – both orthodox and heretical – interpreted during the great Trinitarian and christological debates of the fourth and fifth centuries. Theodore's understanding provides a remarkable entry point into his exegetical assumptions and methods, along with his Christology.

### **Theodore's Commentary on Psalm 44**

Theodore of Mopsuestia's commentary on Psalm 44 is extensive.<sup>6</sup> As with his commentary on other psalms, he begins with a foreword that introduces the reader to the psalm's content, historical situation, and other information that he deems necessary. Theodore then moves to the exegesis of the psalm itself by providing commentary on each successive verse or portion thereof.

Psalm 44 is one of only four psalms acknowledged by Theodore to be directly prophetic of Christ at the plain narrative level of the Bible, as distinguished from a more spiritual reading (the others are Psalms 2, 8, and 110). To those familiar with contemporary biblical scholarship and its strong historical and literary focus, his tendency to deny that the Psalms predict Christ is not a surprise. However, set within the context of the history of exegesis, Theodore's extremely

conservative interpretation of the Psalms runs so entirely against the grain of early Christian (and Jewish) exegesis that it can be characterized as nothing less than shocking, all the more so when we consider the abundant use of the Psalms in the New Testament itself. No other early Christian exegete and theologian even come close to Theodore in this regard, except Diodore of Tarsus, his teacher and mentor.

In a very concise manner in the introduction of the text (v. 2) Theodore lays out both the positive and negative poles of his exegesis. Psalm 44 is a precise and compelling prophecy of Christ and the church, and has nothing to do with Solomon and his wife.

In verse 2, it is actually the occurrence of τῷ βασιλεῖ that commands Theodore's attention and elicits lengthy discussion on the true meaning of the Psalm. Why so much anxiety over the real identity of the king? No doubt, his specific concern is to deny an interpretation that would understand verse 2 as God speaking to David, who would then presumably be the king.<sup>7</sup> However, Theodore also wants to refute some Christians who "cooperate greatly with the Jews in [their] evil conspiracy"<sup>8</sup> by referring different verses to different πρόσωπα. Although Theodore is not explicit about this Christian interpretation, research into the history of the exegesis of Psalm 44 shows that verse 2 was commonly understood as God the Father addressing God the (pre-incarnate) Word, while other verses were applied to the Word and spoken by David.<sup>9</sup> In this manner, the psalm came to be interpreted as a prophecy of the eternal generation of the Son. Nonetheless, Theodore is deliberately opposed to this interpretation on exegetical grounds, not theological ones. Such an interpretation, even if long established, introduces something foreign to the true meaning of the text: "the change of person" (τὴν ἐναλλαγὴν τοῦ προσώπου). This, in turn, feeds into the same error the Jews made by interpreting the psalm in references to David or Solomon. Therefore,

Theodore is confronted with divergent interpretations present both inside and outside his own community of faith, and in order to combat them, he marshals his most important exegetical arguments.

In the preface, then, Theodore alerts the reader to two basic points. First, the psalm is unusual because it is a prophecy of Christ and the church. Second, and negatively, he must reject the Jewish interpretation that construes the psalm as referring to Solomon's marriage, both because of its content and because the Jewish interpretation depends upon the methodological error of assuming an *ἐναλλαγή τοῦ προσώπου*.

Although Psalm 44 contains no clear divisions, we can distinguish verses 3-10, which concern Christ, and verses 11-17, which concern the church.

It is especially in vv. 7-8 that Theodore shifts his focus to other Christian interpretations and argues that the passage cannot be reconciled with God the Father, due to verse 8b: "Therefore, God, your God, anointed you."<sup>10</sup> These verses are appropriate only in terms of the incarnate Christ,

...concerning whom he [David] marvelously distinguished the natures [τὰς φύσεις/naturas] for us and exhibited the unity of person [τοῦ προσώπου τὴν ἕνωσιν/*personae unitatem*]. On the one hand, he distinguished the natures by giving forth expressive words for the difference of concepts [νοημάτων] – for very different from "Your throne, O God, is forever," [v. 7a] is "Therefore, God, your God, anointed you" [v. 8b] – and, on the other hand, he exhibited the unity [τὴν δὲ ἕνωσιν/*unitatem vero*] by saying these things about one person [περὶ ἑνὸς προσώπου/*in unitatem personae*].<sup>11</sup>

This passage contains not only characteristic christological language for Theodore, but it is also highly expressive of his exegetical method. Theodore's Christology has been

much debated,<sup>12</sup> and here we receive a glimpse of how he works within the parameters of Nicene orthodoxy. Important for our consideration at present, though, is the fact that his theology is so closely wedded to his exegesis. While verse 7a, “Your throne, O God...,” is clearly directed to Christ’s divinity, and verse 8b, “Therefore God...anointed you,” concerns his humanity, in the psalm David is speaking *of Christ*. That he speaks of one person instead of two is self-evident for Theodore; no attempt is made to explain the unity any further than by simply interpreting the individual component parts of the passage and showing their interrelationship.

At one point, Theodore summarizes his position as follows:

In any case, if anywhere what seems to them a change of person [ἐναλλαγή τοῦ προσώπου] is found, it appears to be in this fashion: the prophet, when explaining matters that concern others, inserts these matters concerning the very people about whom he is speaking on the basis of the sequence of what is said [ἐκ τῆς τῶν λεγομένων ἀκολουθίας] as though they were God’s words [τά...ὡς ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰρημμένα]. But these words are in sequence [ἀκόλουθα ὄντα] with all the rest that is said concerning those of whom he makes the ὑπόθεσιν of the Psalm. And when he does this in order to speak of something that has been or will be done, it is on the basis of its own proper and close relationship to the subject matter [ἀπὸ τοῦ πράγματος] that he fashions the speech which he attributes to the one doing it.<sup>13</sup>

Three significant exegetical terms occur here that are critical for understanding Theodore’s exegesis: ἀκολουθία, πρόσωπον, and ὑπόθεσις.<sup>14</sup> Although it is rare for them to be found together, all three occur throughout Theodore’s *Commentary on the Psalms*.

In this work it is evident, first, that Theodore is almost en-

tirely concerned with the ἱστορία of the biblical text rather than its θεωρία.<sup>15</sup> By ἱστορία I mean the narrative meaning of the text, not its literal or historical meaning. On the other hand, θεωρία refers to the spiritual meaning of Scripture in Antiochene theological circles.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the ἱστορία of any given text may also provide the θεωρία, since the narrative meaning on occasion can and does supply the spiritual sense. At the same time, in many instances this not the case.<sup>17</sup> Theodore's concentration on the ἱστορία accounts for the striking absence of typology, which he employs elsewhere, and the result that an entire dimension of his exegesis is, for the most part, missing in the *Commentary on the Psalms*.<sup>18</sup> This provides a cogent reason for his lack of interest in the fulfillment of psalm passages in the New Testament, a point clearly overlooked by Devréesse (and others). He merely described Theodore as less "trenchant" in his later *Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, in which references to the New Testament are more abundant.<sup>19</sup>

Secondly, Theodore's exegetical approach to this ἱστορία is best examined by analyzing the three key words that have been identified – ἀκολουθία, πρόσωπον, and ὑπόθεσις. Even in the secondary literature dedicated to exploring Theodore's exegesis, there is a definite lack of attention to the importance and meaning of these terms and their inter-relationship. This is particularly the case with ἀκολουθία and ὑπόθεσις. As for πρόσωπον, scholars have been far more concerned with its *theological* rather than its *exegetical* use.

Thirdly, what will emerge is Theodore's own pervasive concern to arrive at a unified understanding of each psalm, extending all the way to David's total enterprise as the Old Testament prophet *par excellence*. While all elements of his exegesis of the Psalms exhibit this concern, it is especially his use of ἀκολουθία, πρόσωπον, and ὑπόθεσις, both individually and in concert with each other, that clearly es-

tablishes this trait. Hence, it will be strikingly evident that Theodore's approach cuts against the grain of the common Jewish and Christian tendency in antiquity to treat verses in isolation from their scriptural context.

### Ἀκολουθία

Overwhelmingly, ἀκολουθία refers to the continuity or sequence of the biblical narrative. This is demonstrated throughout the *Commentary* as Theodore carefully attends to the literary connection within a single verse, between verses, and extending to an entire psalm. He even notes narrative progression from one metaphor or idea to another.

On the other hand, ἀκολουθία does not merely refer to the "bare" text as it stands, but to its logical order and interpreted meaning. Theodore consistently analyses words or phrases, parts of speech, punctuation, syntax, and textual variants.<sup>20</sup> He can even rearrange the narrative sequence so that it makes sense.

At the most basic level, ἀκολουθία simply refers to unpacking the logic of the Bible. This logic is equated neither with the *prima facie* order of the narrative nor with its meaning,<sup>21</sup> but is always related to both. In reality, ἀκολουθία stands midway between the text of Scripture and its interpretation, functioning as a transition from one to the other.

Finally, I note that ἀκολουθία significantly aids Theodore in establishing and maintaining a constant thread of interpretation or train of thought.<sup>22</sup> Not only is continuity discerned in the biblical text, but Theodore's own exegesis itself forms an ongoing context and is not divided into individual sections.<sup>23</sup> This underscores the fact mentioned earlier that in the *Commentary on the Psalms*, Theodore is in reality concerned with the unity of the ἱστορία of the biblical text. Since the ἱστορία does not, in absolute terms, equal the letter of Scripture, neither does the ἀκολουθία. Uncovering

the ἀκολουθία is an important step in moving toward a unified perspective of each psalm.

Other ancient Christian fathers and writers shared, at least to some degree, Theodore's attention to the ἀκολουθία<sup>24</sup> of the biblical text: for example, Athanasius the Great,<sup>25</sup> Diodore of Tarsus,<sup>26</sup> Gregory of Nyssa,<sup>27</sup> John Chrysostom,<sup>28</sup> and Theodoret of Cyrrhus.<sup>29</sup> It was Rudolf Bultmann who first suggested that Theodore's own contribution was to elevate ἀκολουθία by employing it in far higher measure than was customary.<sup>30</sup> Such an opinion holds up well in light of what we know based upon extant patristic literature.

### Πρόσωπον

Since the period of his literary activity follows the first two ecumenical councils and he explicitly identifies himself with Orthodoxy, Theodore naturally employs πρόσωπον in his teaching about the Trinity and Christ. In particular, his vigorous attempts to adequately convey the unity of Christ involved this term, although its precise meaning for him has been much debated in this century.<sup>31</sup> However, as stated earlier, for our purposes it is the *exegetical* use of πρόσωπον in Theodore's *Commentary on the Psalms* that is significant. Indeed, we might even go so far as to ask whether he *only* uses πρόσωπον as an exegetical term. Closely associated with this question is the key phrase, ἐναλλαγή τοῦ προσώπου.

It may initially be observed that Theodore does in fact employ the term πρόσωπον in his opening comments on each psalm. Virtually every preserved or reconstructed introduction contains at least one instance of its use. On the other hand, in the body of Theodore's actual exegesis, πρόσωπον is infrequent.

It is clear from the *Commentary on the Psalms* itself and has been noted by Devréesse and others that, according to Theodore, David is the sole speaker in all the Psalms. This

view was assumed in general by all theological circles in ancient Christianity and Judaism. What is important for Theodore, however, is that David, while under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, may assume the role of someone else and speak on his behalf: “*sive in sua sive in aliorum persona*.”<sup>32</sup> Those for whom David speaks are either individuals (divine or human) or groups of people<sup>33</sup>:

**Individuals:**

David (i.e., himself)

Solomon

Hezekiah

Jeremiah

Onias III

God the Father

Christ or the Assumed Man

**Groups:**

Two tribes of Judah

Babylonian exiles

Righteous remnant in Babylon

Maccabees

With the foregoing in mind, we can now turn to the issue of ἐναλλαγή τοῦ προσώπου with the hope of both illuminating Theodore’s exegesis and addressing a central argument of his interpretation of Psalm 44.

While there are a few other occurrences of this term, Theodore’s commentary on Psalm 44 is the best locus for his view on the issue of ἐναλλαγή τοῦ προσώπου. As we observed earlier, the identity of the πρόσωπον is crucial. Who is speaking in the psalm? Who is spoken about (the king and queen)? Can these persona ever vary? On this issue more than any other, Theodore’s views are shaped in response to interpretations in Judaism and Christianity that are at variance with his own.



Evidently, there was no shortage of traditional interpretations. Those in Judaism would have included the following:

(1) in v. 2: “I, David, speak good words to king Solomon,” reflected in Theodore’s opening comments in the preface: εἰς γὰρ τὸν Σολομῶντα καὶ τὴν τούτου γυναῖκα βούλονται εἰρῆσθαι τὸν ψαλμόν.<sup>34</sup>

(2) “I, God, speak good words to king David,” reflected in Theodore’s comments on verse 2b: Οὐ γάρ, ὡς ὠήθησαν, ἑτέρου ἐστὶ προσώπου τό· Λέγω ἐγὼ τὰ ἔργα μου τῷ βασιλεῖ, ὡς τοῦ Θεοῦ λέγοντος περὶ τοῦ Δαυὶδ ὅτι αὐτῷ μέλλει λέγειν τὰ ἔργα.<sup>35</sup>

The lack of a single interpretation accurately reflects the fluidity within rabbinic Judaism. In early Christianity, as noted above, a prevailing interpretation maintained that Psalm 44 was spoken by God the Father concerning the eternal generation of the Word (Λόγος) and could be expressed as follows: “I, God the Father, speak forth [i.e., generate] God the Word as king.” The evidence shows that this exegesis appears at least as early as Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258).<sup>36</sup> Then, during the theological controversies of the fourth century, Athanasius developed and elevated this approach in the church’s struggle against Arianism. For him, verse 2 is spoken by God the Father to God the Son,<sup>37</sup> teaches that the Word is from God himself,<sup>38</sup> and shows that the Son has been begotten eternally and has an origin different from creatures.<sup>39</sup> Further, in commenting on verses 7 and 8, Athanasius elaborates his theological understanding of the person and work of the Incarnate Word by stating that, “his nature is unalterable,”<sup>40</sup> that “both his divinity and kingdom (verse 7) as well as his descent to us (verse 8) are revealed,”<sup>41</sup> and that “he was anointed not as a reward for virtue but because he condescended to us in the flesh that he assumed by the Holy Spirit for the salvation of the human race.”<sup>42</sup> In the west, this approach was adopted by Ambrose of Milan.<sup>43</sup>

At the same time, Origen's interpretation of Psalm 44 is intriguing.<sup>44</sup> After agreeing at first with the traditional view that verse 2 is spoken by God the Father to the pre-incarnate Word, he then abruptly reverses himself. It is really David who speaks, as verse 3 ["therefore God has blessed (you) forever"] shows. However, while the first half of the psalm is from the person of David, the second half is spoken from the person of God the Father. He elaborates, "It is not difficult, however, to show that changes of persons occur frequently in the Psalms so that these words [in verse 11], 'Hear, O daughter...', might be in this passage from the Father, though the Psalm as a whole is not." Such interpretations seem to lie behind Theodore's struggle with the issue of πρόσωπον in Psalm 44. While laying out his own thesis that the πρόσωπον involves David addressing the incarnate Christ, he attacks these traditional views as fraudulent (κακοτεχνία).<sup>45</sup> At the heart of his argument is the charge that in his eyes they introduce the same fundamental, methodological error: an ἐναλλαγή τοῦ προσώπου. And the result is the same in each case: the unity of the psalm is not only threatened but destroyed. His reasoning is worth recalling:

What seems to be a change of person – and is one in their view – is found when it happens that the prophet speaks about others. And the change of person, as they understand it, so that we may posit it in this way, never appears in this fashion in the psalms, as though now the prophet were speaking to God and again God were answering the prophet. But when he makes a speech about things – explaining conduct or prophesying the future – he always inserts, from the sequence of what is said, the things said by God harmoniously with those about which he is speaking.<sup>46</sup>

This shows that, in Theodore's eyes, the Psalms can only contain a report of dialogue, never an actual dialogue as such. This is his way of dealing with different voices that are pres-

ent in the biblical text. Always these are integrated within the unified perspective of the role (πρόσωπον) that David adopts and the single person (πρόσωπον) about whom he speaks. "The apparent change introduced by the prophet ought to have some kind of harmony with the sequence of what is being said."<sup>47</sup> Any true ἐναλλαγή τοῦ προσώπου would destroy the literary unity of the psalm, since both David's role and the subject whom he addresses (or speaks for) are compromised. The different voices heard in Psalm 44 reflect not an actual dialogue but rather dialogue integrated into a unified literary perspective.<sup>48</sup> Accordingly, the ἀκολουθία of the passage points toward the πρόσωπον, which represents the formal principle of unity in the psalm and which expresses itself as the role and situation David has adopted.

Yet, Theodore is clearly not alone in rejecting what must have been considered in his day the dominant interpretation of Psalm 44 among Christians. Consider Basil the Great who, in a homily, does not hesitate to confront the issue of dialogue as a type of ἐναλλαγή τοῦ προσώπου. He has this to say about verse 2a:

...Already some have thought that these words are spoken from the person [ἐκ προσώπου] of the Father concerning the Word who was in the beginning with him, whom, they say, he [the Father] brought forth as though from his heart and bowels: and from a good heart came forth a good word. However, it seems to me that these words are spoken by the prophetic person. For what follows in the text no longer in a similar way accords, for us, with the interpretation about the Father. The Father would not have said about his tongue that "My tongue is the pen of a keen scribe; you are more beautiful than the sons of men." For it has exceeding beauty that cannot be compared with that of human beings. And further he says, "Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness." For he did not say, "I, God, anointed you," but "He anointed you" so that it is shown

from this that the person who is speaking is someone else. Accordingly, who else could this be than the prophet [i.e., David] who possesses the energy of the Holy Spirit?<sup>49</sup>

This is indeed a remarkable statement, and it is embedded in a marvelous homily. However, what is striking above all is the basis upon which Basil, like Theodore, rejects the prevailing norm. He is not at all opposed on theological grounds. Indeed, both men would have agreed wholeheartedly with the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Λόγος. Basil objects on the basis of exegesis. The narrative sequence and unity of the psalm is explicitly preserved only by understanding that it is entirely spoken by David in a manner directly prophetic of Christ.

### ὑπόθεσις

Like πρόσωπον, ὑπόθεσις occurs throughout the *Commentary on the Psalms*, although primarily in the introductory comments to each psalm.

I would agree that for Theodore of Mopsuestia, ὑπόθεσις essentially designates the subject matter or topic<sup>50</sup> of a biblical passage whose limits are determined by exegesis. Lampe lists a number of early patristic authors from various exegetical “schools” who employed ὑπόθεσις in this sense: Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Didymus the Blind, Cyril of Alexandria, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus.<sup>51</sup> Further, this subject matter is connected, though not identified, with a particular historical context that is integral to the πρόσωπον David has adopted.

Therefore, it is instructive to list the categories of ὑπόθεσις that Theodore identifies in the Psalter together with the specific psalms that correspond to each:<sup>52</sup>

(1) Moral: teaching/correcting the behavior of individuals, the Hebrew nation, or all people; Psalms 1, 11, 36, 48, 49, 77;

(2) Dogmatic: teaching the order of creation and divine providence over human affairs; Psalms 4 and 18;

(3) Historical: prophesying the present or future:

(a) Present: David's own life - Psalms 3, 6-7, 9-10, 12, 15-17, 21, 35, 37-38, 63, 67, 69, 139;

(b) Future:

(i) Solomon - Psalm 71;

(ii) Ahaz - Psalm 44;

(iii) Era of Hezekiah - Psalms 13-14, 28-29, 31-33, 40, 47, 51-53, 74-75;

(iv) Jeremiah - Psalm 34;

(v) Babylonian Deportation, Captivity, and Return - Psalms 5, 22-23, 25, 30, 39, 41-42, 50, 60, 62, 64-66, 70, 72, 76, 80, 118, 140-142, 144-147;

(vi) Maccabean era - Psalms 43, 46, 54-59, 61, 68, 73, 78-79, 143;

(vii) Christ - Psalms 2, 8, 44 [and 110].<sup>53</sup>

While Theodore certainly uses the term ὑπόθεσις to designate the subject matter or topic of a psalm, he appears to limit its use to the historical genre and to disassociate it from the moral or doctrinal ones. Ὑπόθεσις is closely connected to the historical situation in which the πρόσωπον is found and so correlates with the προσωπα David has adopted.

In addition, ὑπόθεσις refers to the material unity of each psalm. It is clear that Theodore did not consider all books of Holy Scripture to be a single literary unit.<sup>54</sup> For example, the writings of the prophets are not, as a whole, a unit; only individual revelations are.<sup>55</sup> Yet Theodore *does* assume the literary unity of every psalm and New Testament epistle. In addition, on the basis of comparison with Hellenistic Greek literature, Schäublin contends that Theodore uses ὑπόθεσις in a pronounced literary-critical sense.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, as much as scholars have noticed the connection of ὑπόθεσις with the purpose and subject matter of a psalm, above all it desig-

nates the topical unity of the biblical narrative that is always related to history but is nevertheless distinct from it.

In summary, for Theodore the task of interpretation involves the following key elements:

- identifying the *πρόσωπον*, the role assumed by David (who);
- identifying the *ὑπόθεσις*, the topic addressed by the speaker (what); and,
- defining the *ἀκολουθία*, the logic that connects *πρόσωπον* and *ὑπόθεσις* (how).

These lead to the correct meaning of the biblical text at the level of *ἱστορία*. With this, we can now move on to understand Theodore's teaching of Christ within its most appropriate context: Christological interpretation of the biblical narrative.

### **Christology**

The secondary literature on Theodore's Christology reveals a wide range of perspectives.<sup>57</sup> Earlier analyses often used defective textual bases, although later ones could overlook important correctives previously published. An entire gamut of methodologies is represented, either separately or in combination: philosophical and dogmatic,<sup>58</sup> historical,<sup>59</sup> linguistic,<sup>60</sup> anthropological,<sup>61</sup> liturgical,<sup>62</sup> biblical and exegetical.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, it is evident that even when using the very same data, scholars can reach conclusions that are diametrically opposed. In the end, this may say more about our own predilections, training, or biases than about Theodore's doctrine itself.

At the same time, I wish to make the following points. First, in general, modern assessments have tended to judge Theodore's Christology by the anachronistic standard of Chalcedon (thirty years after his death). This has happened either explicitly, by questioning Theodore's orthodoxy, or

implicitly, by focusing on the incarnation of Christ as a timeless philosophical puzzle that can only be solved by some form of Christology based on two natures. Has Chalcedon itself obscured the fact that, at the very least, some earlier Christologies, including Theodore's, strove to maintain a narrative context for the Incarnation?

Second, as perhaps most thoroughly exemplified by Sullivan's exhaustive analysis, most scholars have approached Theodore's Christology from a philosophical perspective.<sup>64</sup> This applies both to form (language) and content (meaning).

Third, no matter which methodology or primary sources were used, no consensus has emerged at all. Balanced scholars can be found on all sides of the debate. Contributing to this deadlock is the tragic fact that most of Theodore's vast literary output perished long ago, with precious little recovered in our own age.

Fourth, although the exegetical nature of Theodore's Christology is recognized at times, it seldom focuses on the narrative character of his doctrine. That Theodore is considered the greatest biblical scholar of the School of Antioch and one of the greatest in the ancient church as a whole is questioned by no one. However, this does not necessarily lead to an appraisal of the consequences of exegesis on doctrinal teaching.

Although restricted to the *Commentary on the Psalms*, my contention is that Theodore's biblical exegesis is profoundly centered on narrative with an astonishing absence of the philosophical terminology so characteristic of his age. The proper exegetical understanding of ἀκολουθία, πρόσωπον, and ὑπόθεσις will point toward a fresh way of looking at Theodore's Christology within the context of his interpretive methods and assumptions. What will emerge is the fact that Theodore's narrative exegetical methodology yields a narrative Christology. Since Theodore sees the

unity of the historical psalms in the one πρόσωπον and the one υπόθεσις of Scripture, this suggests a correlation with a Christology that sees the unity of Christ in the same πρόσωπον and υπόθεσις that appear in the biblical story. Uncovering the ἀκολουθία points to a unified understanding of not just the text but also of the Son of God incarnate.

Theodore's christological interpretation of Psalm 44 emerges in his commentary on the first half of the psalm, above all verses 2, and 7-9.

As noted earlier, many church fathers understood the king to be the pre-incarnate Word of God. For them, verse 2 describes the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. However, for Theodore the ἀκολουθία, πρόσωπον, and υπόθεσις of Psalm 44 do not admit such a meaning. Rather, they point to the incarnate Christ in history. Any dialogue involving God as speaker destroys the text by introducing an ἐναλλαγή τοῦ προσώπου which, like a foreign substance within the human body, threatens the integrity of the biblical text and corrupts the sequence of biblical events (ἀκολουθία τῶν πραγμάτων). Indeed, for Theodore, this ἐναλλαγή τοῦ προσώπου, whether introduced by Jews or Christians, is tantamount to eisegesis.<sup>65</sup> David alone is the speaker in the psalm, though he can take on a certain role and can report dialogue between speakers. But the king must remain the same throughout the entire psalm.<sup>66</sup>

The heart of his christological interpretation lies in this commentary on verses 7-9.<sup>67</sup> Christ's divinity (verse 7) and humanity (verse 8) are sharply distinguished. But his unity is also evident because David speaks "about one person."<sup>68</sup> Since the psalm's πρόσωπον and υπόθεσις are single, the incarnate Christ, who is addressed in verse 7 as God and then in verse 8 as man, cannot be divided into two separate entities. And based upon the ἀκολουθία, this passage cannot refer to God the Father since verse 8b would not make sense. In verse 9a, Theodore again contrasts the assumed



man (“from your robes” means “body”) with the internal, indwelling Word.<sup>69</sup> The highly exalted description of the king in verses 3-6 and 8-9 alone can fit with the assumed man and no other human ruler.

### Summary

In the *Commentary on the Psalms*, the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia emerges in his exegesis of Psalm 44. From his detailed commentary we can draw some conclusions.

First, Theodore firmly roots his Christology in the exegesis of Holy Scripture. Doctrine arises from careful interpretation of the narrative text. Philosophical terms and points of reference are scarce. There is no real difference between exegesis and theology.

Second, he assumes that Scripture speaks of the incarnate Lord as one *πρόσωπον*, understood as an exegetical term, not a technical, theological one. This has to do with the single role that David assumes in each psalm, along with the person about whom he is speaking.

Third, Theodore also assumes that the Bible speaks of the Incarnation as a narrative, rather than any particular, historical event. This is reflected in his use of *ὑπόθεσις* to designate the subject matter of a given psalm, connected to a historical setting and providing material unity.

Fourth, when Scripture distinguishes between the divine and human in Christ, it follows the basic distinction between the uncreated and the created. In following this distinction systematically, Theodore risks dividing Christ.

Fifth, he attempts to resolve this dilemma in his Christology by using the category of a single honor (glory, authority), since the humanity acquires certain characteristics of the divinity. In turn, this honor implies that Theodore wants to describe the union in Christ by using the dynamic analogy

of grace rather than the more static analogy of a metaphysical union of body and soul in a human person. This is how he arrives at his most characteristic description of the incarnate Lord, "the indwelling of the Man by good pleasure as in a Son." Such thoroughly biblical terms point to an understanding of the union in terms of the intersection of divine grace and human freedom, which are dynamic activities that correlate with the biblical narrative. This is quite different from striving to understand the mystery of the Incarnation in terms of timeless, metaphysical concepts.

Finally, given his strong exegetical perspective and scriptural orientation, it is safe to say that Theodore does not *intend* to divide the one person of the incarnate Lord by distinguishing divinity and humanity. The basic problem of his Christology remains, then, how to speak adequately of the union of divine and human in Christ.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> According to the Septuagint numbering of the Psalms, which Theodore used. The Septuagint numbering will be followed throughout in order be consistent with Theodore's own text. Thus, Psalm 44 corresponds with Psalm 45 in most English bibles.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 3, *The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature from the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon* (Utrecht/Antwerp: Spectrum, 1975), 401-414.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Isaac the Syrian, *Mystical Treatises*, (trans. Holy Transfiguration Monastery; Brookline, MA: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1984), an early medieval ascetic writing that has exerted great influence in Eastern Christian spirituality. In it, Isaac makes a number of references to Theodore under this epithet.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Bradley Nassif, "The 'Spiritual Exegesis' of Scripture: The School of Antioch Revisited," *Anglican Theological Review* 65 (1993): 437-470.

<sup>5</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia. *Le Commentaire de Théodore de Mopsueste sur Les Psaumes (I-LXXX)*, (ed. Robert Devréesse; Vatican City, 1939).

<sup>6</sup> It amounts to twenty-three pages in Devréesse's text critical edition of *Le Commentaire de Théodore de Mopsueste sur les Psaumes (I-LXXX)*

(hereafter referred to as *Commentary on the Psalms*), 277-299. The average length of his commentary on an individual psalm is, in approximate terms, only seven pages.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 279:24-26.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 280:1-5.

<sup>9</sup> Examples include the following pre-Nicene fathers: Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus* (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, [trans. Marcus Dods; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994], 98); Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, *Against Hermogenes* and *Against Praxeas* (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, [trans. Peter Holmes; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994], 299, 487, 601, and 605); Alexander of Alexandria, *Catholic Epistle*, (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 6, [trans. James Hawkins; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994], 297); and Victorinus, *On the Creation of the World* (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7, [trans. Robert E. Wallis; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994], 342). During the Nicene period, Athanasius the Great uses it in *Deposition of Arius*, *Defense of the Nicene Definition*, and the *Four Discourses Against the Arians* (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. 4 [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1953]). More on this below.

<sup>10</sup> *Commentary on the Psalms*, 289:20-25; cf. 288:18-20.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 289:25-290:3.

<sup>12</sup> Aside from the ancient debates, the list of modern analyses, with opposing viewpoints, is lengthy.

<sup>13</sup> *Commentary on the Psalms*, 281:31-39.

<sup>14</sup> “proposal, suggestion, purpose, occasion, role, function; subject of discussion or a literary work, lawsuit, speech or play; supposition; presupposition or premise; basis,” in Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), 1881-1883.

<sup>15</sup> In this regard, compare Gregory of Nyssa’s use of *ἰστορία* in *The Life of Moses*, (trans. and ed. by Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson; New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Devréese, *Essai sur Théodore de Mopsueste*, 79-80, where he draws specific attention to Theodore’s prologue to his commentary on Nahum in the *Commentary on the Minor Prophets*. Also, note especially Bradley Nassif who terms *θεωρία*, “spiritual exegesis” of the Antiochenes, as distinct from their “purely literal” exegesis (“The ‘Spiritual Exegesis’ of Scripture: The School of Antioch Revisited,” in *Anglican Theological Review* 75 [1993]: 437-470). His focus is entirely on *θεωρία* rather than *ἰστορία*. Central to his thesis is the claim that “*theōria* (‘vision, insight, contemplation’) lies at the center of the Antiochenes’ dual concern for a historical and yet Christological reading of the Bible. It not only permitted but required them to find ‘mystical’ interpretations that were based upon and congruent with the literal sense of the text. In short,

*theōria* specified the content and character of a distinctly Antiochene form of mystical exegesis" (438).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. the point made by Nassif in his conclusion: "Indeed, the central point that has caused so much confusion over the past hundred years among those who have tried to nail down the precise meaning of *theōria* in Antiochene exegesis comes down to this: in many cases the spiritual sense was the historical sense, but sometimes it was not" (468).

<sup>18</sup> Contrast, for example, Theodore's use of typology in the *Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, especially his exegesis of Jonah (*Commentarius in XII Prophetas*, [ed. Hans Norbert Sprenger; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977]). Devr  esse provides a convenient analysis of what constitutes a type (*Essai sur Theodore de Mopsueste*, 90-91).

<sup>19</sup> Devr  esse, *Essai sur Theodore de Mopsueste*, 73. Note especially his revealing comment in n. 2: "Dans les Petits Proph  tes, Th  odore se montrera moins tranchant."

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the various features of Theodore's exegesis of the minor epistles of Paul (*Commentary on the Minor Epistles of S. Paul*, vol. 1, *Galatians – Colossians*, [ed. H. B. Swete; Cambridge: University Press, 1880], lxxv-lxxvii).

<sup>21</sup> Contra Devr  esse.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Bultmann, *Die Exegeses des Theodor von Mopsuestia*, [ed. Helmut Feld and Karl Herman Schelke; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1994], 70), and Swete, lxxvii-lxxviii. Bultmann also points out that Theodore usually guards against doing this forcibly, and that his observations of literary or logical digression in the Bible demonstrate his keen sense for this train of thought (cf. his commentary on Rom 5:12 and 1 Cor 7:29; Bultmann, 73-4).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Bultmann, 34. One can also compare this with Theodore's interpretation of the Nicene Creed. At the beginning of chapter seven, he explicitly continues in accordance with the sequence of what he has already said (*The Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene Creed*, [trans. and ed. Alphonse Mingana, in *Woodbrooke Studies*, vol. 5; Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1932], 72, 186).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. also two other closely related terms: τ  ξις and σκοπ  ς.

<sup>25</sup> Prologue to commentary on the Psalms (*Patrologia Graeca* 27:56A, as noted by Christoph Sch  ublin, *Untersuchungen zu Methode und Herkunft der Antiochenischen Exegese* [K  ln-Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1974], 72).

<sup>26</sup> Commentary on Gen 49:11 (*Patrologia Graeca* 33:1579C) and Ps 91 (*Patrologia Graeca* 33:1626B), as well as prologue to Commentary on the Psalms (Bultmann, 69-70, n. 1; Sch  ublin, 70).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. especially Jean Danielou, *L'  tre et le temps chez Gregoire de Nysse* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970). As Danielou shows,   κολουθ  ia also func-

tioned as a powerful exegetical tool in the hands of this Cappadocian father. Indeed, there are many inviting comparisons between Theodore and Gregory with regard to the use of ἀκολουθία as a technical term (19-24), including: the logical link of two propositions or a series of reasoning from initial principles to final consequences (25-28); the literary sequence of narrative, distinct from the biblical text as a simple exposé of facts, that scripture reports to the reader (30-42).

<sup>28</sup> Homily on Gen 4:4 and 13:2, commentary on Isa 1:9 and 5:2, and homily on Ps 3:1 (noted in Bultmann, 69-70, n. 1).

<sup>29</sup> Prefaces to the Psalms and the Song of Songs (idem, *Patrologia Graeca* 80:861A, and 81:29B; Schäublin, 70).

<sup>30</sup> Bultmann, 82.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. in particular, Theodore's commentary on Psalms 8:5-8 (*Commentary on the Psalms*, 45-49) and 44:8b (289-90).

<sup>32</sup> Psalm 3:9 (Ibid., 19:1-7). Cf., also Psalm 7:9 – sive ex sua sive ex persona aliena (Ibid., 39:4-11).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Psalm 44: 2b where Theodore states: Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἔθος αὐτῶ ἀντὶ πράγματος λέγειν τὴν φωνήν, ὡς ἀποδέδεικται ἡμῖν πολλαχοῦ, ἐνίοτε μὲν ἐπὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἐστὶ δὲ ὅτε καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ (ibid., 280:23-25).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 277:19-21.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 279:24-26.

<sup>36</sup> Cyprian of Carthage, *Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, (trans. Ernest Wallis; New York: Scribner's Sons, 1926), 516, 518.

<sup>37</sup> Athanasius, *Deposition of Arius*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. 4, (trans. M. Atkinson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 70. Here Athanasius conjoins Psalm 110:3 (LXX) as words also spoken by the Father to the Son, "Out of the womb I have begotten Thee before the morning Star." Cf. also *Discourse III Against the Arians*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. 4, (trans. John Henry Newman; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 379.

<sup>38</sup> Idem, *Defense of the Nicene Definition*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. 4, (trans. John Henry Newman; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 164.

<sup>39</sup> Idem, *Discourse II Against the Arians*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. 4, (trans. John Henry Newman; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 379. Cf. also *Discourse I Against the Arians*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ser. 2, vol. 4, (trans. John Henry Newman; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 333.

<sup>40</sup> Idem, *Discourse I Against the Arians*, 336.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 335. The typical phrase that Athanasius uses for the incarnate

presence of the Word here and elsewhere is ἑνσαρκος παρουσία.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 333-335.

<sup>43</sup> Ambrose of Milan, *Exposition of the Christian Faith*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. 10, (trans. H. DeRomestin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 221, 227 and 279.

<sup>44</sup> Origen, *Commentary on John*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 9, )trans. Allan Menzies; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 320-321.

<sup>45</sup> *Commentary on the Psalms*, 280:1-6.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 280:15-22.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 281:19-21.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 281:19ff.

<sup>49</sup> Basil the Great, *Ὅμιλῳι εἰς ψαλμοὺς*, vol. 5, 262:18-264:7, original Greek text with modern Greek translation by Σοφία Καρακασίδου (Thessalonica: Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς, 1974). English translation: Saint Basil, *Exegetic Homilies*, (trans. Agnes Clare Way; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University, 1963), 275-296. It is interesting that, in interpreting the Psalm's superscript (which Theodore ignores) Basil has already expressed his view that the text deals with the perfection of human nature and provides benefit to those who have chosen to live according to virtue. And since the LXX includes the words ὡδὴ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ, Basil regards the "beloved" as the only-begotten Word who took upon himself the economy of the flesh in the incarnation (*ibid.*, 260:2ff.).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Longinus who uses ὑπόθεσις with the meaning of "theme of poem or treatise" ("On the Sublime," [trans. T. S. Dorsch, *Classical Literary Criticism: Aristotle, Horace, Longinus*, Baltimore: Penguin, 1965], 38:2).

<sup>51</sup> Lampe, 1448-1449.

<sup>52</sup> Naturally we are limited to the psalms that have been preserved. It should also be noted that, in comparison to the *Commentary on the Psalms*, there are some noticeable defects in Psalms 118 and 138-148 that reflect the imprecise and liberal translations of Theodore's writings in Syriac (*Fragments Syriacques du Commentaire des Psaumes: Psaumes 118 et Psaumes 138-148*, in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalum*, vol. 435/436 [ed. Lucas Van Rompay; Lowen: E. Peeters, 1982], xxxv-xxxvii). This includes the fact that, except for Psalm 118, the ὑπόθεσις are shorter than one would expect and are limited to the bare essentials.

<sup>53</sup> Based on 149 psalms in the LXX (instead of 150 for some reason), Louis Pirot assigns them as follows:

- (1) David's own life (19 psalms)
- (2) Assyrian period (25 psalms)

- (3) Babylonian exile & return (66 psalms)
- (4) Jeremiah (1 psalm)
- (5) Maccabean era (17 psalms)
- (6) Messianic (4 psalms)
- (7) No discernable historical setting (17 psalms)

*L'oeuvre Exegetique de Theodore de Mopsueste* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1913).

<sup>54</sup> Bultmann, 69.

<sup>55</sup> See his commentary on Hosea 1:1 in *Commentarius in XII Prophetas*.

<sup>56</sup> Schäublin, 92-93.

<sup>57</sup> Extending from Heinrich Kihn (*Theodor von Mopsuestia und Junilius Africanus als Exegeten* [Freiburg im Brisgau: Herder, 1880]) to the present, and encompassing Protestant, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox scholars who sometimes differ sharply just among themselves.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. W. DeVries, "Der 'Nestorianismus' Theodors von Mopsuestia in seiner Sakramentenlehre," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 7 (1941): 91-148; Milton Anastos, "The Immutability of Christ and Justinian's Condemnation of Theodore of Mopsuestia," in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, no. 6 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1951); above all, Francis A. Sullivan, *The Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, in *Analecta Gregoriana* 82 (1956); and John S. Romanides, "Highlights in the Debate over Theodore of Mopsuestia's Christology and some Suggestions for a Fresh Approach," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 5 (1959-1960): 140-185.

<sup>59</sup> John L. McKenzie, "A New Study of Theodore of Mopsuestia," *Theological Studies* 10 (1949): 349-408, and "Annotations on the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia," *Theological Studies* 19 (1958): 345-373; Robert Victor Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon: A Historical and Doctrinal Survey* (London: S. P. C. K., 1953).

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Kevin McNamara, "Theodore of Mopsuestia and the Nestorian Heresy," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 19 (1952): 254-274, and *Irish Theological Quarterly* 20 (1953): 172-191; and P. Galtier, "Theodore de Mopsueste: a vraie pensee sur l'incarnation," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 45 (1957): 161-185, 338-360.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. R. A. Norris, *Manhood and Christ: A Study of the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); and Joanne McWilliam Dewart, "The Notion of 'Person' Underlying the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia," *Studia Patristica* 12 (1975): 199-207.

<sup>62</sup> L. Abramowski, "Zur Theologie Theodors von Mopsuestia," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 72 (1961): 263-293.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Devréese, *Essai sur Théodore de Mopsueste*; John L. McKenzie, "The Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on John 1:46-51," *Theological Studies* 14 (1953): 73-84; Rowan Greer, *Theodore of Mopsues-*

*tia: Exegete and Theologian* (London: The Faith Press, 1961); Dimitri Zaharopoulos, *Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Bible: A Study of His Old Testament Exegesis* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1989); and Bertrand DeMargerie, *Introduction to the History of Interpretation*, vol. 1, *The Greek and Eastern Fathers*, (trans. Leonard Maluf; Petersham, MA: St. Bede's, 1993).

<sup>64</sup> Francis A. Sullivan, *The Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia*. Also, cf. Alois Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, (trans. John Bowden; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 346ff., where he points out the philosophical presuppositions of the church fathers – Platonic, Neo-Platonic, Stoic, or Aristotelian. One is tempted to ask: What about their literary or exegetical presuppositions?

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 280:2-3. ...τὴν ἐναλλαγὴν τοῦ προσώπου παρεισάγοντες [*italics mine*].

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 282: 1-11. ὃν γὰρ ἂν διόλου γνωρίσωμεν βασιλέα, δῆλον ὅτι τὸν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐνταῦθα νοήσομεν, ἢ παραφθερούμεν ὅλην τοῦ ψαλμοῦ τὴν διάνοιαν νῦν μὲν οὕτω νῦν δὲ ἐτέρῳ νοοῦντες.... Ἐν τοίνυν πρόσωπόν ἐστι διόλου.

<sup>67</sup> Gregory of Nyssa agrees with Theodore that the text refers to the incarnate Christ (*Against Eunomius*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. 5, [trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954], 232), while Gregory of Nazianzus can actually vacillate between the eternal Word of God and the incarnate Christ in his exegesis of Psalm 44 (*The Third Theological Oration*, and *The Fourth Theological Oration*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. 7, [trans. Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955], 307, 310).

<sup>68</sup> *Commentary on the Psalms*, 290: 1-3.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 290:13-15.



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## **Zechariah 1-8 and Millennialism<sup>1</sup>**

ANTONIOS FINITSIS

### **Introduction**

The designation “biblical prophecy” is deceptively simple. More often than not it brings to mind a figure like Isaiah or Ezekiel whose oracles are widely alluded to in the New Testament and have been incorporated in the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church. A closer look at the prophetic material of the Old Testament reveals that not every prophet was like Isaiah or Ezekiel. Nor does the Old Testament invariably use the term “prophet” to designate the same individual. The Old Testament instead uses a number of different and widely varied descriptions of how even contemporary prophets behaved, what their duties were and how they related to their society. Faced with such taxonomic problems, Old Testament scholars turned to a number of methods in order to find solutions. Some of the most interesting advances were achieved with the help of comparative material from sociology and anthropology.<sup>2</sup> At this stage we have quite a few such studies and we need to evaluate their usefulness before we proceed further with this inter-disciplinary enterprise.<sup>3</sup> This paper seeks to evaluate one specific proposition: the introduction of millennialism as a valid analogue for understanding prophecy. We will divide our discussion into two parts. First, we will show how scholars have used millennialism in order to shed light on prophecy. Second, we will look at the biblical text to see the degree to which the categories of prophecy and millennialism are compatible.

### **Prophecy and Apocalypticism**

Since the relationship between prophecy and millennialism is established through their relationship to apocalypticism, it is necessary to turn our attention first to the relationship between prophecy and apocalypticism. Apocalypticism was the last of the biblical genres to come under critical scrutiny. When it did, the determination of its origin became a heated question. Initially it was considered a foreign import, but soon scholars recognized that it was organically connected with Israelite culture. In light of this recognition, its relationship to the other indigenous genres attracted a lot of attention. A number of scholars pointed to the similarities between apocalypticism and the wisdom tradition.<sup>4</sup> The exact relation between prophecy and apocalypticism, however, proved to be a more controversial subject. At the center of this controversy was the realization that wisdom continued to flourish independently from apocalypticism for a long time, while prophecy declined at the time when apocalypticism thrived. The observation that the decline of prophecy was inversely analogous to the rise of apocalypticism encouraged the supposition that the two phenomena were interrelated and brought about a series of treatises, which sought to reexamine prophecy with an eye to apocalypticism.

All these scholarly probings on the matter focused on the Second Temple period, which is the transitional period par excellence for Judaism. More importantly, the Second Temple period is the time when prophecy undergoes a series of prominent changes and when some of the novel traits that turn up for the first time in the prophetic books become apocalyptic hallmarks. The book of Zechariah is traditionally viewed as the nexus of this process since both date and content place it safely in this transitional phase and since its literary form resembles the literary form of Apocalypses. Because of these traits, Zechariah figures prominently in ev-

ery relevant discussion.<sup>5</sup> Every investigation paid attention to sociological considerations because no one could ignore the fact that the Israelite states in which prophecy came to prominence had been destroyed and that the nation where apocalypticism grew was a new entity that had little in common with monarchical Israel. If prophecy and apocalypticism were related, then scholars felt they had to pinpoint the area in which the two phenomena interfaced.

### **From Prophecy to Millennialism via Apocalypticism**

The search for this interface between prophecy and apocalypticism introduced millennialism as the overarching category that encompasses both phenomena. The ground for the introduction of millennialism was laid with Paul Hanson's influential book *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*.<sup>6</sup> Hanson concluded that the historical and sociological matrix of apocalypticism is found in the Second Temple inner-community struggle between two opposing religious factions, the priests and the prophets. In this struggle the priests represented the interests of the ruling classes and the controlling powers of the period, whereas the prophets were the advocates of the powerless and disenfranchised people in the community. Because of their political alliances, the priests had to defend the *status quo*; therefore, their method of expression had to be pragmatic and historically specific. Since the prophets spoke for the marginalized and power-deprived elements in the post-exilic society, they resorted to a mode of expression with a strong otherworldly orientation. Hanson argues that the Second Temple visionaries drew on earlier prophetic eschatology in order to convey their message. Because they presented it in a visionary format, they transformed it into apocalyptic eschatology. Thus, Hanson believes, eschatology was the umbilical cord between prophecy and apocalypticism.

In order to construct this theory Hanson relies on the sociological theories provided by Mannheim<sup>7</sup> and Troeltsch.<sup>8</sup> Although there are indisputable indications in the oracles of Third-Isaiah of an inner-community conflict, there is no concrete description of the parties involved in this conflict. Nor does juxtaposition of these oracles with the rest of the contemporary prophetic material reveal the details of this conflict. That is why Hanson turns to the social sciences; his goal is to retrieve the missing pieces. From Troeltsch he borrows the idea that there are two types of religious organization: the Church-type, which relies on the ruling classes and therefore prefers pragmatic types of expression; and the sect type, which relies on the suppressed classes, and thus turns to eschatological types of expression.<sup>9</sup> At the core of this proposition lies Hanson's belief that the tension between the visionary and the realistic elements is "a struggle basic to all ethical religions."<sup>10</sup> That is how Hanson comes up with his version of a conflict between the priests and the prophets. From Mannheim he takes the idea that utopian thinking is an attempt to judge the status quo and to supplant the old structures with a new order.<sup>11</sup> Mannheim suggests that utopian wishes, which are temporal in nature, can be called chiliasms.<sup>12</sup> Thus millennial terminology was introduced as a side effect of Hanson's attempt to describe the conflict that gave rise to apocalypticism. Millennialism was understood as comparable to apocalypticism because, according to Mannheim, they both shared a utopian orientation. Since apocalypticism and prophecy shared a connection *via* eschatology it made sense to presume that prophecy, apocalypticism and millennialism were interrelated through the "utopian wishes" found in all three.<sup>13</sup>

Before we discuss the way this presumption was fleshed out by subsequent scholars we need to examine how helpful is Hanson's description of this Second Temple conflict for Zechariah 1-8. According to Hanson's theory, since

Zechariah uses a visionary medium to communicate his message, he should represent the powerless strata of his community and should have an apocalyptic eschatological orientation. Rather, Hanson concludes, Zechariah represents the ruling classes and as we shall argue shortly in detail he does not have an eschatological orientation. Therefore Hanson modifies his original proposition in order to claim that Zechariah used the appealing eschatological elements of apocalypticism but owed his allegiance to the priests. In Hanson's opinion, Zechariah simply appropriated some of the apocalyptic motifs advocated by the disenfranchised rival party in order to make the priestly program more attractive to the masses. This modification already shows that Hanson's proposal is problematic. It becomes obvious that the emergence of apocalypticism cannot be attributed solely to one group and that this was a more complex process than Hanson had initially argued.

Stephen L. Cook's book *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*<sup>14</sup> questioned the proposition put forth by Hanson and pursued further Hanson's indirect reference to millennialism. Specifically, Cook challenged Hanson's contention that the apocalyptic phenomenon is tightly connected to alienated, peripheral or disenfranchised groups. Cook set out to present evidence that post-exilic prophetic texts with affinities to apocalypticism "have been produced by power holding priestly groups, not marginal and not deprived groups."<sup>15</sup> Cook then observed that the apocalyptic worldview and social phenomenon share family resemblances with the millennial worldview and social phenomenon. Cook suggested recourse to sociological and anthropological material produced by the investigation of millennialism in order to explain the origin of apocalypticism.

Cook's thesis is correct: apocalyptic thinking should not be exclusively delegated to marginalized groups. It can also originate from mainstream groups and can play a positive

role in its society. However, this does not justify his assertion that material gathered from the study of millennialism can be successfully used to illuminate apocalypticism. There are a number of problems involved in this enterprise that render the fruitfulness of such comparison dubious. Chief among these problems is the issue of terminological difficulties. George Shepperson has noted that scholars have been notoriously lax in their use of such terms and adds that there is more than one definition of millennialism and not all of them are compatible.<sup>16</sup> Cook decides to use a definition for millennialism that functions as the lowest common denominator for the description of this phenomenon. In this decision he followed the lead of Sylvia Thrupp,<sup>17</sup> who defined as millennial “religious movements that have been animated by the idea of a perfect age or a perfect land.”<sup>18</sup> Even with this generalized definition, Thrupp admits that there are several different types of movements even within the same culture evident not just from a diachronic perspective but also from a synchronic one, let alone cross-culturally and cross-temporally.<sup>19</sup> Given the degree of dissimilarity within the millennial movements, Thrupp concedes that there are limits on the comparisons one can draw fruitfully among the various movements.<sup>20</sup> Even a cursory look at Cook’s cases reveals that a disparate variety of cultures are brought together under the millennial rubric, from Jainism and Kabalistic movements to Cargo Cults and Christian chiliasm. This observation begs the questions how far one can push these comparisons and how relevant these paradigms are to post-exilic Judah.

As a rule, in comparative studies the more clearly the compared modalities are related, the better are the results a comparison produces. Cook wants to investigate the details of group formation of social modalities in post-exilic Judah that have an apocalyptic orientation. Yet instead of opting to compare post-exilic prophetic literature with either prophetic material or apocalypses, which are the closest cat-

egories to them, he broadens the comparison by opening to apocalypticism. Cook submits that apocalypses are a subset of apocalypticism, and that apocalypticism is a subcategory of millennialism. In effect, instead of trying to zero in on the material under examination Cook opens up an overarching category that is geometrically broader in scope. As a result, the clarity of the comparison is compromised by his attempt to compare in such a loosely defined overarching category.<sup>21</sup>

A concrete example of this predicament is Cook's discussion of what he calls "apocalyptic features" in Zechariah 1-8, which, in his opinion, is a specimen of proto-apocalyptic literature, and hence is comparable to millennial movements. As we have mentioned, Hanson hinged the connection of prophecy with apocalypticism on eschatology. Cook opts for a new set of criteria: "radical eschatology," "dualism," and a number of secondary features that vary with each text. However, this new set does not help us overcome the problems that Hanson faced mainly because there are again definitional problems.

The first of these problems pertains to the definition of the various types of eschatology. The first of these types is called prophetic eschatology because it is first encountered in classical prophecy. This type involves a direct divine intervention in history; a clear example would be the proclamation of the Day of Lord in Amos (5:18-24). Prophetic eschatology is distinguished easily from apocalyptic eschatology. John Collins has argued that the feature that demarcates clearly these two types of eschatology is the individual judgment of the dead. This feature appears first in apocalypses.<sup>22</sup> In between these two types there is the eschatology found in post-exilic prophecy which, even though it has cosmic dimensions and espouses a break from the present order, does not go as far as judgment after death. A clear example of this type is found in Zechariah 9-14 and the Book of Joel. Cook does not offer a definition of what he calls "radical eschatology;"



he uses it as if it were the same with apocalyptic eschatology.<sup>23</sup> As Collins has argued, post-exilic eschatology varies in degree from prophetic eschatology, but it does not vary in kind.<sup>24</sup> Cook seems to imply that it does. His argument would have been clearer if he had described how it does. As it now stands, “radical eschatology” as a term seems to be closer to apocalyptic eschatology, while in content it is closer to prophetic eschatology. The traits that Cook discusses in Zechariah 1-8 under the rubric “radical eschatology” are all present in classical prophecy. Therefore, God’s control over the whole world (Zech 6:5; 4:14), God’s direct intervention in history (Zech 1:17), God’s anger against the nations (Zech 1:18-21) and the deployment of the divine forces (Zech 6:1-8) are all motifs found in the old divine-warrior tradition which appears in Exodus, the Psalms and classical prophecy. The visions in Zechariah 1-8 have a cosmic element but the eschatology they espouse is not transcendent. Therefore, “radical eschatology” is inadequate as a category to show the exact relationship between the prophetic and apocalyptic eschatology.

I believe that Cook is further off the mark in his discussion of “dualism.” His argument on “radical eschatology” would have been more convincing if Cook could have shown that this particular kind of eschatology has a strong dualistic character. Dualism is usually defined as a “dichotomy of the principles which, coeternal or not, cause the existence of that which does or seems to exist in our world.”<sup>25</sup> In most cases the apocalyptic eschatological scenario includes a final fight between two opposing forces ending in appropriate retribution, which constitutes the dualistic feature of apocalypticism. The prophetic texts Cook is analyzing are markedly monotheistic. The overarching understanding of the world is monistic rather than dualistic. The accuser and the wickedness in Zechariah act in a way that challenges God’s authority but they are in no position to fight God and in the end do

God's bidding. Cook attempts to fortify his claim on dualism by pointing to binary oppositions: present age and age to come, natural world and supernatural world, which can be construed from the information in the texts. However, not every binary division constitutes dualism. Moreover, there is an element of circularity in the occurrence of these particular bipolar divisions. Cook works with a definition of millennialism that involves the idea of a perfect age and a perfect land; therefore, he is bound to find these modalities in contrast with the present age and land.

Since, as we have shown, Cook's basic categories cannot carry the burden of evidence of any form of connection on their own we will not delve into the secondary motifs that are of a more random nature.<sup>26</sup> Cook has cast his net wide in working with the most flexible definition of millennialism. In the end the categories that can be traced throughout such a broad spectrum of literature are so loosely defined that they cannot offer any precision or clarity for our work.

The ensuing confusion is clearly demonstrated in Peter Bedford's most recent book.<sup>27</sup> Although Bedford wants to retain the idea of Zechariah as a millenarian prophet, he wants to do so under the provision that Zechariah is best understood as a prophet resisting colonial oppression.<sup>28</sup> According to Bedford, Zechariah is comparable to millenarian prophets because he experienced oppression or political estrangement; a claim that is exactly the opposite of what Cook hoped to prove with his comparison of the biblical material and millennial movements. Given the fact that the category of millennialism has produced only contradictory results in the study of Zechariah, we are forced to reevaluate its usefulness by checking it against the biblical text.

### **Zechariah 1-8 and Millennialism**

In order to investigate whether the millennial social para-

digm can indeed be used as a parallel with explanatory force for the situation reflected by Zechariah 1-8, it is necessary to first to provide a standard definition of millennialism. Then we need to examine whether there are shared elements between this definition and Zechariah's message. Specifically, we would need to clarify two important points: 1) the features they share which may give the impression that they are comparable and 2) any indigenous characteristics that set them apart. It would be helpful to begin with a definition of millennialism:

Millennialism is the belief that the end of this world is at hand and that in its wake will appear a New World, inexhaustibly fertile, harmonious, sanctified, and just. The more exclusive the concern with the End itself, the more such belief shades off toward the catastrophic; the more exclusive the concern with the New World, the nearer it approaches the utopian.<sup>29</sup>

The two features that are prominent in this definition of millennialism are the end of the contemporary world and the coming of a new one. The stress in this change is placed in the catastrophic dimensions of the end and the utopian traits of the new. Zechariah speaks of a change in the *status quo*, but this change is neither annihilatory nor utopian. Zechariah 1:21 and 2:9, which refer to the punishment of the nations, convey a message of retribution rather than complete destruction. Furthermore, according to the first and the last vision (Zech 1:11; 6:8), what is stressed is the peaceful state of the cosmos. There is no proclamation of a coming catastrophe. Zechariah's visions reflect a concern for a political rather than a cosmic change. The prophet works carefully in order to establish the credentials of the two figures he considers crucial for this change: Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest (Zech 3:1-10 and 4:1-13). His goal is to present and set on a firm basis the innovative form of rule he proposes: the diarchy. This agenda is further illustrated by the

description of the coronation of the branch (Zech 6:9-14). Zechariah is interested in concrete persons. The changes he advocates have to do with the present world, and they are by no means catastrophic.

The new order that Zechariah describes is ideal but not utopian. Zechariah does not proclaim a primitive paradise/new creation the way Third-Isaiah does (Isa 65:17-25). In the third vision (Zech 2:5-9), Jerusalem appears rebuilt and populous due to divine protection. Zechariah's vision of Jerusalem projected a restored, re-populated city, not a recreated one.

Moreover, Zechariah does not address concerns that are typical for millennial groups. He is not interested in questions like: "What are the signs of the End? At what stage, toward that end, is his society to be located? Exactly how much time is there before the End?" For Zechariah the time of the change is the time he lives in (Zech 1:16, 2:10-13). He also does not present a degenerative epochal scheme, as is found in millennial theories. On the contrary, Zechariah advocates restoration. The seventy years of God's anger have passed (Zech 1:12); now it is the time for compassion and prosperity (Zech 1:16-17).

In his essay, H. Schwartz mentions three additional traits which are usually found in millennial movements: 1) expectation of an interim paradise before an ultimate heavenly assumption; 2) anticipation of one thousand years of peace; and 3) stipulation of a saintly elite or a messianic presence.<sup>30</sup> The first two traits are not encountered in Zechariah at all. There are concrete points where the prophet makes messianic claims (Zech 3:8; 4:14; 6:12), however, as H. Schwartz concedes, messianism is not a reliable trait since "we can make no easy distinctions between messianic and millenarian movements."<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, although certain millennial traits can be found in Zechariah 1-8, there are other more important traits of

millennial movements which are lacking. Hence, one should not resort to comparisons with millennial groups to analyze this material. The similarities between the two are superficial and can be better explained in a different way. In order to dispel any remaining doubts we will now turn our attention to the last point of similarity, Zechariah's messianic ideas.

### **Zechariah and Messianism**

In order to evaluate properly Zechariah's messianic ideas it would be helpful to begin again with a definition of messianism:

The Hebrew word מָשִׁיחַ, however, means simply "anointed" and does not necessarily refer to an eschatological figure at all. While it refers to a royal figure some thirty times in the Hebrew Bible, it can also refer to other figures, most notably the anointed high priest. The association of the term with an ideal Davidic king derives from Ps 2:2, which speaks of the subjugation of all the peoples to God's anointed. In the postexilic period, when there was no longer a king in Jerusalem, we occasionally find the hope for an ideal king of the future. It is not helpful, however, to restrict the discussion of messianism too narrowly to occurrences of מָשִׁיחַ or its translation equivalents; it is best to reserve the English term "messiah" for figures who have important roles in the future hope of the people.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, a messianic figure is a person who can be either a king, a priest, or a prophet. Furthermore, over the years there developed several terms by which such a figure was designated. What remained constant was the association of this specific figure with a change in the community's future.

Scholars agree that messianic claims in Zechariah 1-8 are to be located in three passages: 3:8; 4:11-14 and 6:11-13. It would be best then to examine each passage separately and discuss its messianic message.

*Zechariah 3:8*

“Now, listen, Joshua, high priest, you and your colleagues who sit before you! For they are an omen of things to come: I am going to bring my servant the Branch.”

In this verse the promise revolves around the “Branch.” Joshua is told that the Lord is bringing an individual that is designated with a term that bears messianic connotations in Isaiah (11:1) and Jeremiah (23:5). Zechariah and his audience were familiar with these oracles and hence it follows that the reference here is to the Davidic descendant, Zerubbabel.<sup>33</sup>

It is important to note the context in which this promise appears. The vision in which it appears is devoted entirely to Joshua the high priest. With this vision Joshua was absolved of all guilt and was reinstated to ritual purity. In the immediately preceding verse (3:7) Joshua is told that his position of power will be retained only as long as he is faithful to God. With this verse the author attempts to curtail in a sharper way Joshua’s authority. By bringing up the theme of the Davidic descendant in the vision that is concerned primarily with the absolution and glorification of the high priest, Zechariah seeks to balance out the importance of Joshua with that of Zerubbabel.

*Zechariah 4:11-14*

“Then I said to him [the angel]. ‘What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?’ And a second time I said to him, ‘What are these two branches of the olive trees, which pour out the oil through the two golden pipes?’ He said to me, ‘Do you not know what these are?’ I said ‘No my lord.’ Then he said, ‘These are the two sons of oil who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.’”

As it becomes clear from the angel’s explanation, the lampstand is God. What is peculiar, however, is that there are two figures flanking him, both of whom share a heraldic

position and seem to have the same prerogatives with respect to the deity. Although it is not specific, the most likely candidates for these two figures are Joshua and Zerubbabel. It is of further interest that the prophet uses the filial language to describe their relationship to God. Up to this point in Israel's history, one would use the filial language to describe the relationship between God and the king. Therefore, we can conclude that the appropriation of the filial language means that these figures are viewed as community leaders. As D. L. Petersen comments, the fact that there are two persons with equal rights towards the deity "entails a significant restructuring of the Judahite/Jerusalemite polity."<sup>34</sup> First, the polity envisioned by the prophet is not monarchic but diarchic; the divine authority is transmitted to two representatives of God's sovereignty. Second, the relationship between the deity and the leadership is more reciprocal than it had been in the past.<sup>35</sup> As in the previous messianic reference, Zechariah wants to stress that God will be the ultimate overseer who will give them their power and ensure their lawful behavior.

### *Zechariah 6:11-13*

"Take the silver and gold and make crowns, and set (one) on the head of the high priest Joshua son of Jehozadak; say to him: Thus says the Lord of hosts: Here is a man whose name is Branch: for he shall branch out in his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord. It is he that shall build the temple of the Lord; he shall bear royal honor, and shall sit upon his throne and rule. There shall be a priest by his throne, with peaceful understanding between the two of them."

The diarchic polity advocated in the earlier vision is taken further with the command to create two crowns. While one would expect the future king to wear a crown, the crown intended for the high priest points to his elevated position. While it is true that priests wore a specific headdress, this has

never been called a crown. Except for this verse in Zechariah, the word *טרה* has never been used for priests but is used only to refer to crowns of civil authority.<sup>36</sup> This is an innovative use that reflects the novel polity of the post-exilic community. The coronation of Zerubbabel is omitted but he is the only other person who could wear the second crown. The fact that the priest is standing by the throne of the king seems to imply that his status is lower than that of the Davidic descendant. Nevertheless, the prophet hastens to mention that despite this difference in status there is going to be “peaceful understanding between the two” and thus underlines the cooperative leadership between them.

Therefore, messianic hope in Zechariah receives a new form radically different from previous expressions. Zechariah seems to be referring to the near future instead of the eschatological one. The prophet’s message has a clear political character. There is not only one figure who is expected to usher in the change for the community; there are two. Whenever the messianic topic comes up Joshua and Zerubbabel are presented in an intertwined way. They are to govern Judah in close cooperation. It seems that Zechariah advocates this kind of polity because he wants one to hold the other in check. He does not want either one of them to have absolute power. By breaking up the governing of his people in two persons he hopes to avoid the mistakes of the past when a king could abuse power because there was nobody to check his exercise of power. Zechariah also does not miss a chance to clarify that God himself, the ultimate source of power, will constantly be behind these two figures and hence, guarantee their lawful conduct. Thus, the messianic hopes found in Zechariah 1-8 are very particular and do not seem to foster any kind of millennial ideas.



## Conclusion

Comparative material from the study of millennial movements was thought to be comparable to prophecy; scholars used data collected from the study of millennialism in order to explain post-exilic biblical prophecy. The introduction of the millennial parallel brought about contradictory results regarding Zechariah's role in his society. In light of this observation, we set out to evaluate the usefulness of millennialism in the study of Zechariah 1-8. We argued that such an enterprise is fraught with terminological difficulties that hinder clarity and precision. Our examination of Zechariah 1-8 vis-à-vis millennialism indicated that the similarities between them are superficial. The messianic passages in Zechariah are not concerned with the eschaton or the creation of a new world, rather they were meant to restructure his community and advocate a novel type of political organization: the diarchy.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Professor John J. Collins for offering valuable feedback on this article.

<sup>2</sup> The scholar who presented the most convincing argument for the use of sociological methods in the study of prophecy was Robert Wilson.; see Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). Thomas W. Overholt, *Prophecy in Cross-Cultural Perspective: A Sourcebook for Biblical Researchers. SBL Sources for Biblical Study* 17, (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholar's Press, 1986) has been equally successful in his arguments for the use of anthropological studies. See also Thomas W. Overholt, *Cultural Anthropology of the Old Testament*, (ed. Gene M. Tucker; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> The abundance of these studies has been favored by two factors. First, there have been a number of sociological treatises on religion and religious expression; second, there have been several anthropological studies on societies in which prophecy plays a dominant role.

<sup>4</sup> Gustav Hölscher argued that wisdom is the source of apocalypticism;

see: Gustav Hölscher, "Die Entstehung des Buches Daniel," *TSK* 92 (1919), 113-38. Otto Plöger offered a similar argument; see Otto Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, (trans. S. Rudman; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968) 16, 27. Gerhard von Rad later expanded Hölscher's theory in Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2, (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), and Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, (trans. James D. Martin; London: S. C. M. Press; Valley Forge Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> The connection of Zechariah to apocalypticism was first noticed by Heinrich Ewald, *Die Propheten Des Alten Bundes*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1841) 3:318. More recently in Uppsala both North and Amsler underlined Zechariah's proximity to apocalypticism. Robert North, "Prophecy to Apocalyptic via Zechariah," *VTSup* 22 (1972), 71; Samuel Amsler, "*Zacharie et l'origine de l'apocalyptique*," *VTSup* 22 (1972), 231. Hartmut Gese, however, has made this point forcefully by arguing that Zechariah marks the end of the time of prophecy and that his visions are the oldest Apocalypse known to us. See Hartmut Gese, "*Anfang und Ende der Apokalypitik, dargestellt am Sacharjabuch*," *ZTK* 70 (1973) 24.

<sup>6</sup> Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979).

<sup>7</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, (trans. and ed. Louis Wirth; New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949).

<sup>8</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, vol 1. (trans. Olive Wyon; New York: Harper Brothers, 1960).

<sup>9</sup> Troeltsch, *Social Teachings*, 331-343.

<sup>10</sup> Hanson, *Dawn*, 211. Hanson's belief seems to be true only of a very specific form of ethical religion or at least a certain stage of development of an ethical religion. The presupposition that all ethical religions behave in a similar sociological manner is wrong, as is the notion that they all follow a standard pattern of evolution with distinct and identical phases. One should also note that Troeltsch describes social phenomena that take place several centuries later and that are related tightly to medieval historical circumstances.

<sup>11</sup> Mannheim, *Ideology*, 173-179.

<sup>12</sup> Mannheim, *Ideology*, 185.

<sup>13</sup> The repercussions of this assertion can be seen in David Aune's book on prophecy, in which he states that eschatological prophetic movements that advocated an active response to political events are similar to millennial movements. See David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerd-

mans, 1983) 121.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen L. Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism: The Postexilic Social Setting*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Shepperson notes that scholars have borrowed terms from the Jewish-Christian concept of millennialism to describe phenomena that have nothing to do with Jewish-Christian tradition. He adds that there is an added complication: the term "millennial" is used in two ways. First, "to refer to the final state of society in which all conflicts are resolved and all injustices removed after a preliminary period of purging and transformation," while, "in reality, of course, the traditional concept of the millennium has a transitional rather than final character." See George Shepperson, "The Comparative Study of Millenarian Movements," in *Millennial Dreams in Action*, (ed. Sylvia L. Thrupp; The Hague: Mouton, 1962), 44. The problems that a classification of Millenarian movements run into are also discussed by Kenelm Burridge, *New Haven New Earth* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 97-104. Burridge even asserts that given the lack of a specific theory and conceptual framework, the comparison of the various movements is "wholly dependent on the investigator's intuitive insights" (103).

<sup>17</sup> Sylvia Thrupp consciously gave up the broadly accepted definition of millennialism and opted to use a more general concept in order to facilitate an inter-disciplinary discussion that would include both historical and contemporary field studies. Sylvia L. Thrupp, "Millennial Dreams in Action: A Report on the Conference Discussion," in *Millennial Dreams in Action*, (ed. Sylvia L. Thrupp; The Hague: Mouton, 1962), 11-27.

<sup>18</sup> Thrupp, "Millennial Dreams," 11.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Thrupp's discussion on the historical pattern of millennial movements in the various cultures examined ("Millennial Dreams," 15-22).

<sup>20</sup> Specifically, Thrupp maintains that two types of issue were readily comparable in these movements. First were the general issues of the aesthetic perception of the cosmos and the kind of ordeal that would make loyal followers "magically" worthy of the new age/land; second were specific aspects like the ones that pertain to the organization or ethos of the movement ("Millennial Dreams," 22-25).

<sup>21</sup> As Robert Wilson notes, a comparison between apocalyptic groups calls for some flexibility since these groups tend to be individualistic and share various features to a limited degree. Robert Wilson, "The Problems of Describing and Defining Apocalyptic Discourse," *Semeia* 21 (1981), 134. I believe, however, that Cook (*Prophecy and Apocalypticism*) stretches this flexibility to the its breaking point.

<sup>22</sup> John J. Collins, "Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of

Death," *CBQ* 36 (1974), 21-43. See also John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 11-12.

<sup>23</sup> In fact in his discussion of Ezekiel 38 and 39 he calls it "apocalyptic eschatology" (88).

<sup>24</sup> John J. Collins, "Prophecy, Apocalypse and Eschatology: Reflections on the Proposals of Lester Grabbe," in *Knowing the End from the Beginning*, (ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak; London, New York: Continuum, 2003), 48. See also John J. Collins, "The Eschatology of Zechariah," in *Knowing the End from the Beginning*, (ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak; London, New York: Continuum, 2003), 76.

<sup>25</sup> The historian of religion Ugo Bianchi offers this definition of dualism. Ugo Bianchi, "The Category of Dualism in the Historical Study of Religion," *Temenos* 16 (1980), 15.

<sup>26</sup> Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 131-33 focuses on three secondary motifs that Zechariah 1-8 shares with apocalyptic and millennial literature: a) literary form, b) predetermination of history, and c) messianism. As we have already indicated, Zechariah's literary form is indeed similar to the literary form that is prevalent in apocalyptic literature. His discussion on determinism, however, is problematic. Determinism in apocalyptic literature involves the periodization of history, which implies that God has predetermined everything from beginning to end in successive intervals. This is meant to communicate the certainty that God is still in control of the situation. The fact that in Zechariah 1-8 events that affect the earthly plane originate from the heavenly does not convey a similar idea of periodization or predetermination. We will explore the idea of messianism in greater detail in the next section of this paper.

<sup>27</sup> Peter R. Bedford, *Temple Restoration in early Achaemenid Judah* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> Bedford, *Temple Restoration*, 264-270.

<sup>29</sup> H. Schwartz, "Millenarianism," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol 9, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 521.

<sup>30</sup> H. Schwartz, "Millenarianism," 522.

<sup>31</sup> H. Schwartz, "Millenarianism," 522.

<sup>32</sup> John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*, (New York: Doubleday 1995), 11-12.

<sup>33</sup> It has been suggested that the term "branch" is preferred by Zechariah because it offers an interesting play with the name Zerubbabel, "seed of Babylon." cf. C. M. Meyers and E. M. Meyers, *Haggai Zechariah 1-8, The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 202. Walter Rose has argued that the term "branch" precludes identification with a historical figure such as Zerubbabel; see: Walter H. Rose, *Zemah*

*and Zerubbabel, Messianic Expectations in the Early Postexilic Period, JSOTSup 34* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 91-120. According to Jeremiah 33:14-22, however, it seems that the term “branch” was coined specifically for a descendant of David.

<sup>34</sup> D.L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah, A Commentary, The Old Testament Library*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987) 233.

<sup>35</sup> D. L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 234.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. C. M. Meyers and E. M. Meyers, *Haggai Zechariah*, 351.

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